

COMMENTARY

BOOKS

IN THREE VOLUMES

A
COMMENTARY
ON THE
BOOK OF PSALMS.
IN THREE VOLUMES.

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COMMUNARY

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

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COMMENTARY

ON THE
BOOK OF PSALMS.

IN WHICH

Their LITERAL OR HISTORICAL SENSE, as they relate to KING DAVID, and the PEOPLE OF ISRAEL, is ILLUSTRATED; and their APPLICATION to MESSIAH, to the CHURCH, and to INDIVIDUALS, as Members thereof, is POINTED OUT: with a view to render the Use of the PSALTER, PLEASING and PROFITABLE to all ORDERS and DEGREES of CHRISTIANS.

VOLUME FIRST.

THE THIRD EDITION.

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PRESIDENT OF MAGDALEN COLLEGE, OXFORD, AND
CHAPLAIN IN ORDINARY TO HIS MAJESTY.

All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the Psalms concerning me. Luke xxiv. 44.

I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. I Cor. xiv. 15.

They sing the song of Moses, and the song of the Lamb. Rev. xv. 3.

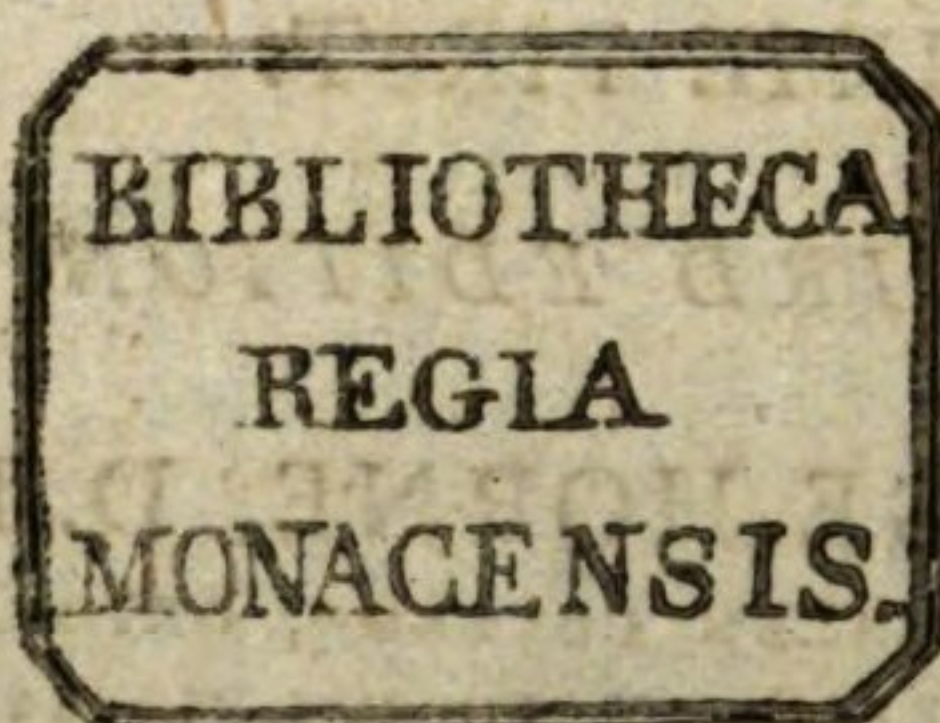
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ЭТИ ИЛИ

BOOK OF PSALMS.



P R E F A C E.

THE Psalms are an epitome of the Bible, adapted to the purposes of devotion. They treat occasionally of the creation and formation of the world; the dispensations of providence, and the œconomy of grace; the transactions of the patriarchs; the exodus of the children of Israel; their journey through the wilderness, and settlement in Canaan; their law, priesthood, and ritual; the exploits of their great men, wrought through faith; their sins and captivities; their repentances and restorations; the sufferings and victories of David; the peaceful and happy reign of Solomon; the advent of Messiah, with its effects and consequences; his incarnation, birth, life, passion, death, resurrection, ascension, kingdom, and priesthood; the effusion of the Spirit; the conversion of the nations; the rejection of the Jews; the establishment, increase, and perpetuity of the Christian church; the end of the world; the general judgment; the condemnation of the wicked, and the final triumph of the righteous with their Lord and King. These are the subjects here presented to our meditations. We are instructed how to conceive of them aright, and to express the different affections, which, when so conceived of, they must excite in our minds. They are, for this purpose, adorned with the figures, and set off with all the graces of poetry; and poetry itself is designed yet farther to be recommended by the charms of music, thus consecrated to the service of God; that so delight may prepare the way
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for improvement, and pleasure become the handmaid of wisdom, while every turbulent passion is calmed by sacred melody, and the evil Spirit is still dispossessed by the Harp of the son of Jesse. This little volume, like the paradise of Eden, affords us in perfection, though in miniature, every thing that groweth elsewhere, “every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food:” and above all, what was there lost, but is here restored, THE TREE OF LIFE IN THE MIDST OF THE GARDEN. That which we read, as matter of speculation, in the other Scriptures, is reduced to practice, when we recite it in the Psalms; in those repentance and faith are described, but in these they are acted; by a perusal of the former, we learn how others served God, but, by using the latter, we serve him ourselves. “What is there necessary for man to know,” says the pious and judicious Hooker, “which the Psalms are not able to teach? They are to beginners an easy and familiar introduction, a mighty augmentation of all virtue and knowledge in such as are entered before, a strong confirmation to the most perfect among others. Heroical magnanimity, exquisite justice, grave moderation, exact wisdom, repentance unfeigned, unwearied patience, the mysteries of God, the sufferings of Christ, the terrors of wrath, the comforts of grace, the works of providence over this world, and the promised joys of that world which is to come, all good necessarily to be either known, or done, or had, this one celestial fountain yieldeth. Let there be any grief or disease incident unto the soul of man, any wound or sickness named, for which there is not, in this treasure-house, a present comfortable remedy at all times ready to be found.”* In the language of this
divine

* Hooker Ecclesiast. Pol. B. v. Sect. 37.

divine book, therefore, the prayers and praises of the church have been offered up to the throne of grace, from age to age. And it appears to have been the Manual of the Son of God, in the days of his flesh; who, at the conclusion of his last supper, is generally supposed, and that upon good grounds, to have sung an hymn taken from it; * who pronounced, on the cross, the beginning of the xxii. Psalm; "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And expired, with a part of the xxxi. Psalm in his mouth; "Into thy hands I commend my spirit." Thus He, who had not the Spirit by measure, in whom were hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and who spake as never man spake, yet chose to conclude his life, to solace himself in his greatest agony, and at last to breathe out his soul, in the Psalmist's form of words, rather than his own. No tongue of man or angel, as Dr Hammond justly observes, can convey an higher idea of any book, and of their felicity who use it aright.

Proportionable to the excellency of the Psalms, hath been the number of their expositors. The ancients were chiefly taken up in making spiritual or evangelical applications, of them; in adapting their discourses on them to the general exigencies of the Christian church, or to the particular necessities of the age in which they wrote. The moderns have set themselves to investigate with diligence, and ascertain with accuracy, their literal scope and meaning. Piety and devotion characterize the writings of the ancients; the commentaries of the moderns display more learning and judgment. The

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ancients

+ St Matthew informs us, Chap. xxvi. 30. that he and his apostles "sung an hymn;" and the hymn usually sung by the Jews, upon that occasion, was, what they called "the great Hallel," consisting of the Psalms from the cxliith to the cxviiiith inclusive.

ancients have taught us how to rear a goodly superstructure; but the moderns have laid the surest foundation. To bring them in some measure together, is the design of the following work; in which the author has not laboured to point out what seemed wrong in either, but to extract what he judged to be right from both; to make the annotations of the latter a ground-work for improvements like those of the former; and thus to construct an edifice, solid, as well as specious. Materials, and good ones, he cannot be said to have wanted; so that if the building should give way, the cement must have been faulty, or the workman unskilful.

The right of the Psalter to a place in the sacred canon hath never been disputed; and it is often cited by our Lord and his apostles in the New Testament, as the work of the Holy Spirit. Whether David, therefore, or any other prophet, were employed, as the instrument of communicating to the church such or such a peculiar Psalm, is a question, which, if it cannot always, be satisfactorily answered, need not disquiet our minds. When we discern, in an epistle, the well known hand of a friend, we are not solicitous about the pen, with which it was written.

The number of Psalms is the same in the original, and in the version of the LXX; only these last have, by some mistake, thrown the ninth and tenth into one, as also the hundred and fourteenth and the hundred and fifteenth, and have divided the hundred and sixteenth into two, as also the hundred and forty seventh. The Hebrews have distributed them into five books; but for what reason, or upon what authority, we know not. This is certain, that the apostles quote from "the book of
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P R E F A C E.

of Psalms,"* and that they quote the "second" Psalm of that book, in the order in which it now stands.† The division, which our own church hath made of them, into thirty portions, assigning one to each day of the month, it hath been thought expedient to set down in the margin; as persons may often chuse to turn to the commentary on those Psalms, which occur in their daily course of reading.

In the Titles, prefixed to some of the Psalms, there is so much obscurity, and in the conjectures which have been made concerning them, both in a literal and spiritual way, so great a variety and uncertainty, that the author, finding himself, after all his searches, unable to offer any thing, which he thought could content the learned, or edify the unlearned, at length determined to omit them; as the sight of them, unexplained, only distracts the eye and attention of the reader. The omission of the word *SELAH* must be apologized for in the same manner. The information obtained from the Historical titles will be found in the Argument, placed at the head of each Psalm; though even that is not always to be relied on.

Where this information failed, the occasion and drift of a Psalm were to be collected from the internal evidence contained in itself, by a diligent perusal of it, with a view to the sacred history; the light of which, when held to the Psalms, often dissipates the darkness, that must otherwise for ever envelope allusions to particular events and circumstances. Sometimes, indeed, the descriptions are couched in terms more general; and then, the want of such information is less perceived. If it appear, for instance, that David, at the time of

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composing;

* Acts i. 20.

† Acts xiii. 33.

composing any Psalm, was under persecution, or had been lately delivered from it, it may not be of any great consequence, if we cannot determine with precision, whether his persecution by Saul and Doeg, or that by Absalom and Ahitophel, be intended and referred to. The expressions either of his sorrow or his joy, his strains, whether plaintive or jubilant, may be nearly the same, in both cases, respectively. This observation may be extended to many other instances of calamities bewailed, or deliverances celebrated in the Psalms, sometimes by the prince, sometimes by the community, and frequently by both together. Upon the whole, it is hoped, that the design of each Psalm hath been sufficiently discovered, to explain and apply it, for the instruction and comfort of believers.

The result of such critical enquiries as were found necessary to be made, is given in as few words as possible; often, only by inserting into a verse, or subjoining to it, that sense of a word, or phrase, which seemed, upon mature deliberation, to be the best; as it was deemed improper to clog, with prolix disquisitions of this kind, a work intended for general use. The reader will, however, reap the benefit of many such, which have been carefully consulted for him. And he will not, it is presumed, have reason to complain, that any verse is passed over, without a tolerably consistent interpretation, and some useful improvement. Where the literal sense was plain, it is noticed only so far as was necessary to make an application, or form a reflection. Where there appeared any obscurity, or difficulty, recourse was had to the best critics, and that solution, which seemed the most satisfactory, given in the concise manner. Much labour hath here been bestowed, where little appears.

The

The plan of every Psalm hath been attentively studied, with the connection and dependence of its parts, which it is the design of the Argument to exhibit at one view, and of the Commentary to pursue and explain from beginning to end *.

No person is more thoroughly sensible, than the author is, of the respect and gratitude due from all lovers of the sacred writings, to those who have laboured in the field of literal criticism. Great and illustrious characters, whose names will be had by the church in everlasting remembrance! All, who desire to understand the Scriptures, must enter into their labours, and make the proper advantage of them, as he himself hath endeavoured to do. But let us also bear in mind, that all is not done, when this is done. A work of the utmost importance still remains, which it is the business of Theology to undertake and execute; since, with respect to the Old Testament, and the Psalter more especially, a person may attain a critical and grammatical knowledge of them, and yet continue a Jew, with the veil upon his heart; an utter stranger to that sense of the holy books, evidently intended, in such a variety of instances, to bear testimony to the Saviour of the world; that sense, which is styled, by divines, the PROPHEITICAL, EVANGELICAL, MYSTICAL, or SPIRITUAL sense. As it is one great design of the following work to investigate that sense in many of the Psalms, this is the proper place to lay before the reader those grounds

* Nos Lectoris pium hunc laborem adjuvandum suscepimus: dum constitutis argumentis scopum attentioni figimus: dum scrutamur literam, et ex sacra historia, quantum possumus, omnia repetimus: dum annotamus quæ pietatem inflamment: alia eo exemplo quærenda indicamus. BOSSUET Dissertat. in Psal. Cap. vii.

† Theologiæ insignis hic usus est, ut, verborum sensu exposto, REM intelligas. ELSNER. Præfat. ad Observat. Sacr.

grounds and reasons, upon which such investigation has been made.

That the spiritual interpretation of the Scripture, like all other good things, is liable to abuse, and that it hath been actually abused, both in ancient and modern days, cannot be denied. He who shall go about to apply, in this way, any passage, before he hath attained its literal meaning, may say what in itself is pious and true, but foreign to the text, from which he endeavoureth to deduce it. St Jerom, it is well known, when grown older and wiser, lamented, that, in the fervour of a youthful fancy, he had spiritualized the prophecy of Obadiah, before he understood it. And it must be allowed, that a due attention to the occasion and scope of the Psalms would have pared off many unseemly excrescences, which now deform the commentaries of St Augustin, and other Fathers, upon them. But, these and other concessions of the same kind being made, as they are made very freely, "men of sense will consider, that a principle is not therefore to be rejected, because it has been abused;"* since human errors can never invalidate the truths of God.

It may not be amiss, therefore, to run through the Psalter, and point out some of the more remarkable passages, which are cited from thence by our Lord and his apostles, and applied to matters evangelical.

No sooner have we opened the book, but the second Psalm presenteth itself, to all appearance, as an inauguration-hymn, composed by David, the Anointed of Jehovah, when by him crowned with victory, and placed triumphant on the sacred hill of

* Bishop HURD's Introduction to the Study of the Prophecies, p. 64.

of Sion. But let us turn to Acts iv. 25. and we there find the apostles, with one voice, declaring the Psalm to be descriptive of the exaltation of Jesus Christ, and of the opposition raised against his Gospel, both by Jew and Gentile.

In the eighth Psalm we imagine the writer to be setting forth the pre-eminence of man in general, above the rest of the creation; but by Heb. ii. 6. we are informed, that the supremacy conferred, on the second Adam, the man Christ Jesus, over all things in heaven and earth, is the subject there treated of.

St Peter stands up, Acts ii. 25. and preaches the resurrection of Jesus from the latter part of the sixteenth Psalm; and, lo, three thousand souls are converted by the sermon.

Of the eighteenth Psalm we are told, in the course of the sacred history, 2 Sam. xxii. that "David spake before the Lord the words of that song, in the day that the Lord delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul." Yet in Rom. xv. 9. the 50th verse of that Psalm is adduced as a proof, that "the Gentiles should glorify God for his mercy in Jesus Christ, as it is written, For this cause will I confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name."

In the nineteenth Psalm, David seems to be speaking of the material heavens, and their operations only, when he says, "Their sound is gone out into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." But St Paul, Rom x. 18. quotes the passage to shew, that the Gospel had been universally published by the apostles.

The twenty second Psalm Christ appropriated to himself, by beginning it in the midst of his sufferings on the cross; "My God, my God," &c.

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Three other verses of it are, in the New Testament, applied to him; and the words of the 8th verse were actually used by the chief priests, when they reviled him; "He trusted in God," &c. Matth. xxvii. 43.

When David saith, in the fortieth Psalm, "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire—Lo I come to do thy will:" we might suppose him only to declare, in his own person, that obedience is better than sacrifice. But from Heb. x. 5. we learn that Messiah, in that place, speaketh of his advent in the flesh, to abolish the legal sacrifices, and to do away sin, by the oblation of himself, once for all.

That tender and pathetic complaint, in the forty-first Psalm "Mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lift up his heel against me," undoubtedly might be, and probably was, originally uttered by David, upon the revolt of his old friend and counsellor, Ahitophel, to the party of his rebellious son, Absalom. But we are certain, from John xiii. 18. that this Scripture was fulfilled, when Christ was betrayed by his apostate disciple—"I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen; but that the Scriptures may be fulfilled, "He that eateth bread with me hath lift up his heel against me."

The forty-fourth Psalm we must suppose to have been written on occasion of a persecution, under which the church, at that time, laboured; but a verse of it is cited, Rom. viii. 36, as expressive of what Christians were to suffer, on their blessed Master's account; "As it is written, For thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep appointed to be slain."

A quotation from the forty-fifth Psalm, in Heb. i. 8. certifies us, that the whole is addressed to the Son.

Son of God, and therefore celebrates his spiritual union with the church, and the happy fruits of it.

The sixty-eighth Psalm, though apparently conversant about Israelitish victories, the translation of the ark to Sion, and the services of the tabernacle, yet does, under those figures, treat of Christ's resurrection, his going up on high, leading captivity captive, pouring out the gifts of the Spirit, erecting his church in the world, and enlarging it by the accession of the nations to the faith; as will be evident to any one, who considers the force and consequence of the apostle's citation from it, Eph. iv. 7, 8. "Unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."

The sixty-ninth Psalm is five times referred to in the gospels, as being uttered by the prophet, in the person of Messiah. The imprecations, or rather predictions, at the latter end of it, are applied, Rom. xi. 9, 10. to the Jews; and to Judas, Acts i. 20. where the hundred and ninth Psalm is also cited, as prophetic of the fore judgments which should befall that arch traitor, and the wretched nation, of which he was an epitome.

St Matthew, informing us, Chap. xiii. 34. that Jesus spake to the multitudes in parables, gives it as one reason why he did so, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet; Psal. lxxviii. 2. "I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world."

The ninety-first Psalm was applied, by the Tempter, to Messiah: nor did our Lord object to the application, but only to the false inference which

which his adversary suggested from it. Matt. iv. 6, 7.

The ninety-fifth Psalm is explained at large in Heb. iii. and iv. as relative to the state and trial of Christians in the world, and to their attainment of the heavenly Rest.

The hundred and tenth Psalm is cited by Christ himself, Matt. xxii. 44. as treating of his exaltation, kingdom, and priesthood.

The hundred and seventeenth Psalm, consisting only of two verses, is employed, Rom. xv. 11. to prove, that the Gentiles were one day to praise God for the mercies of Redemption.

The 22d verse of the hundred and eighteenth Psalm, "The stone which the builders refused," &c. is quoted six different times, as spoken of our Saviour.

And, lastly, "the fruit of David's body," which God is said, in the hundred and thirty-second Psalm, to have promised that he would "place upon his throne," is asserted, Acts ii. 36. to be Jesus Christ.

These citations, lying dispersed through the Scriptures of the New Testament, are often suffered by common readers to pass unnoticed. And many others content themselves with saying, that they are made in a sense of Accommodation, as passages may be quoted from poems or histories merely human, for the illustration of truths, of which their authors never thought. "And this, (as a learned critic observes) is no fault, but rather a beauty in writing. A passage applied justly, and in a new sense, is ever pleasing to an ingenious reader, who loves to be agreeably surprized, and to see a likeness and pertinency, where he expected none. He has that surprize, which the Latin poet so poetically gives to the tree;

"Miraturque novas frondes, et non sua poma."

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The readers who have been accustomed to consider the New-Testament-citations, in this view of Accommodation only, must perceive the necessity of such Accommodation, at least, to adapt the use of the Psalms, as a part of divine service, to the times and circumstances of the Gospel; and cannot therefore reasonably object, upon their own principles, to the applications made in the following sheets, for that purpose. But not to enquire, at present whether passages are not sometimes cited in this manner, surely no one can attentively review the above made collection of New-Testament-citations from the book of Psalms, as they have been placed together before him, without perceiving, that the Psalms are written upon a divine, preconcerted, prophetical plan, and contain much more, than, at first sight, they appear to do. They are beautiful without, but all glorious within, like “apples of gold in pictures, or net-cases of silver.” Prov. xxv. 11. The brightness of the casket attracts our attention, till through it, upon a nearer approach, we discover its contents. And then, indeed, it may be said to have “no glory, by reason of the glory that so far excelleth.” * Very delightful and profitable they are, in their literal and historical sense, which well repayeth all the pains taken to come at it. But, that once obtained, a farther scene begins to open upon us, and all the blessings of the Gospel present themselves to the eye of faith. So that the expositor is a traveller ascending an eminence, neither unfruitful, nor unpleasant; at the top of which when he is arrived, he beholds, like Moses from the summit of mount Nebo, a more lovely and extensive prospect lying beyond it, and stretching away to the utmost bounds of the

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everlasting

hills. He sees vallies covered over with corn, blooming gardens, and verdant meadows, with flocks and herds feeding by rivers of water; till, ravished with the sight, he cries out, as St Peter did, at the view of his Master's glory, "It is good to be here!"

It would be unreasonable to suppose, that no parts of the Psalms may by us be spiritually applied, but such as are already expressly applied for us by the inspired writers. Let any man consider attentively a New-Testament-citation; then let him as carefully read over, with a view to it, the Psalm from which it is taken, and see if it will not serve him as a key, wherewith to unlock the treasures of eternal wisdom; if it will not "open his eyes," and shew him "wonderful things" in God's law. When we are taught to consider one verse of a Psalm as spoken by Messiah, and there is no change of person, what can we conclude, but that he is the speaker through the whole? In that case, the Psalm becomes at once as much transfigured, as the blessed person, supposed to be the subject of it, was, on mount Tabor. And if Messiah be the speaker of one Psalm, what should hinder, but that another Psalm, where the same kind of scene is evidently described, and the same expressions are used, may be expounded in the same manner?

It is very justly observed by Dr Alix, that "although the sense of near fifty Psalms be fixed and settled by divine authors, yet Christ and his apostles did not undertake to quote all the Psalms they could quote, but only to give a key to their hearers, by which they might apply to the same subjects the Psalms of the same composition and expression."* The citations in the New Testament were made incidentally, and as occasion was given. But can we
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* Preface to his Book of Psalms, p. 9.

imagine, that the church was not farther instructed in the manner of applying the Psalms to her Redeemer, and to herself? Did she stop at the applications thus incidentally and occasionally made by the inspired writers? Did she stop, because they had directed her how to proceed? We know she did not. The primitive Fathers, it is true, for want of critical learning, and particularly a competent knowledge of the original Hebrew, often wandered in their expositions; but they are unexceptionable witnesses to us of this matter of fact, that such a method of expounding the Psalms, built upon the practice of the apostles in their writings and preachings, did universally prevail in the church from the beginning. They, who have ever looked into St Augustin, know, that he pursues this plan invariably, treating of the Psalms, as proceeding from the mouth of Christ, or of the church, or of both, considered as one mystical person. The same is true of Jerom, Ambrose, Arnobius, Cassiodore, Hilary, and Prosper. Chrysostom studies to make the Psalter useful to believers under the Gospel. Theodoret attends both to the literal and prophetic sense. But what is very observable, Tertullian, who flourished at the beginning of the third century, mentions it, as if it were then an allowed point in the church, that “almost all the Psalms are spoken in the person of Christ, being addressed by the Son to the Father, that is, by Christ to God.”* In this channel flows the stream of the earliest Christian expositors. Nor did they depart, in this point, from the doctrine held in the church of the ancient Jews, who were always taught to regard MESSIAH as the capital object of the Psalter. And though,

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when

* Omnes pene Psalmi Christi personam sustinent,—Filius ad Patrem, id est Christum ad Deum verba facientem representant.

when the time came, that people would not receive Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah, it does not appear that they ever objected to the propriety of the citations made by our Lord and his apostles, or thought such passages applicable to David only, and his concerns. Nay, the most learned of their Rabbies, who have written since the commencement of the Christian æra, still agree with us in referring many of the Psalms to Messiah and his kingdom; differing only about the person of the one, and the nature of the other.

When learning arose, as it were, from the dead, in the sixteenth century, and the study of primitive theology by that means revived, the spiritual interpretation of the Scriptures revived with it. It was adopted, at that time, by one admirably qualified to do it justice, and to recommend it again to the world, by every charm of genius, and every ornament of language. I mean, the accomplished Erasmus, who omitteth no opportunity of insisting on the usefulness, and even the necessity of it, for the right understanding of the Scriptures; for the attainment of that wisdom which they teach, and that holiness which they prescribe; seeming to think himself never better employed, than when he is removing the earth and rubbish, with which those Philistines, the monks, had stopped up the wells of salvation, opened by the Apostles and first Fathers of the church, for the benefit of mankind.* This great man was much importuned by his learned friends, as he informeth us in an epistle to Cardinal Sadolet, to write a commentary on the Psalms.† Such a work, executed by him, had

* Enchirid. Mil. Christ. in Præfat. Canon. 5. et passim.

† Lib. xxv. Epist. 11. Edit. Froben. 10085. Edit. Cler. Non semel rogatus sum quum ab aliis, tum ab Anglorum Rege, ut in omnes.

had been one of the richest gifts that were ever cast into the Christian treasury; as we may judge from the specimen which he hath left us, in his discourses on eleven of them. Some of these were drawn up with a view to enlarge upon the transactions of the times; and in all of them he is more diffuse and luxuriant, than, it is to be presumed, he would have been, in a general exposition. But they abound with a rich variety of sacred learning, communicated in a manner ever pleasing, and ever instructive. If at any time he takes us out of the road, it is to shew us a fine country, and we are still in company with Erasmus. He considers a Psalm, as it may relate to Christ, either suffering, or triumphant; as it may concern the church, whether consisting of Jews or Gentiles, whether in adversity or prosperity, through the several stages and periods of its existence; and as it may be applicable to the different states and circumstances of individuals, during the trials and temptations which they meet with, in the course of their Christian pilgrimage and warfare here below, till having overcome their last enemy, they shall sit down with their Lord in his kingdom; when the scheme of prophecy shall receive its final accomplishment, and “the MYSTERY of God be FINISHED.”*

It is obvious, that every part of the Psalter, when explicated according to this scriptural and primitive method, is rendered universally “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in
b 3 righteousness;”

omnes Psalmos ederem Commentarios; sed deterrebant me quum alia multa, tum illa duo potissimum, quod viderem hoc argumentum vix posse pro dignitate tractari, nisi quis calleat Hebræorum literas, atque etiam antiquitates; partim quod verebar ne turba Commentariorum obscuraretur Sermo Propheticus, citius quam illustraretur.

righteousness;" and the propriety immediately appears of its having always been used, in the devotional way, both by the Jewish, and the Christian church. With regard to the Jews, Bishop Chandler very pertinently remarks, that "they must have understood David their prince to have been a figure of Messiah. They would not otherwise have made his Psalms part of their daily worship, nor would David have delivered them to the church, to be so employed, were it not to instruct, and support them in the knowledge and belief of this fundamental article. Was the Messias not concerned in the Psalms, it were absurd to celebrate, twice a day, in their public devotions, the events of one man's life, who was deceased so long ago, as to have no relations of their affairs; or to transcribe whole passages, from them, in their prayers for the coming of the Messiah." * Upon the same principle, it is easily seen, that the objections, which may seem to lie against the use of Jewish services, in Christian congregations, cease at once. Thus, it may be said, Are we concerned with the affairs of David and of Israel? Have we any thing to do with the ark and the temple? They are no more. Are we to go up to Jerusalem, and to worship on Sion? They are desolated, and trodden under foot by the Turks. Are we to sacrifice young bullocks, according to the law? The law is abolished, never to be observed again. Do we pray for victory over Moab, Edom, and Philistia; or for deliverance from Babylon? There are no such nations, no such places in the world. What then do we mean, when, taking such expressions into our mouths, we utter them in our own persons, as parts of our devotions, before God? Assuredly we must mean a spiritual

* Defence of Christianity, First Part, p. 241.

spiritual Jerufalem and Sion; a spiritual ark and temple; a spiritual law; spiritual facrifices; and spiritual victories over spiritual enemies; all described under the old names, which are still retained, though “old things are passed away, and all things are become new.”* By substituting Messiah for David, the gospel for the law, the church Christian for that of Israel, and the enemies of the one for those of the other, the Psalms are made our own. Nay, they are with more fulness and propriety applied now to the substance, than they were of old to the “shadow of good things then to come.”† And therefore, ever since the commencement of the Christian æra, the church hath chosen to celebrate the gospel mysteries in the words of these ancient hymns, rather than to compose for that purpose new ones of her own. For let it not pass unobserved, that, when, upon the first publication of the Gospel, the Apostles had occasion to utter their transports of joy, on their being counted worthy to suffer for the name of their dear Lord and Master, which was then opposed by Jew and Gentile, they brake forth into an application of the second Psalm to the transactions then before their eyes. See Acts iv. 25. The primitive Christians constantly followed this method, in their devotions; and, particularly, when, delivered out of the hands of persecuting tyrants, by the victories of Constantine, they praised God for his goodness,

* 2 Cor. v. 17. Ergo arrige aures, Christiane Lector, et ubi talia in Davide legeris, tu mihi fac cogitas, non Arcam, fragile lignum, aut Tabernaculum contectum pellibus, non urbem lapidibus compositam: non Templum divinæ Majestati augustum: sed Christi et Ecclesæ Sacramenta, sed vivos lapides, Christo angulari lapidi coaptatos; sed ipsam Eucharistiam præsentis Dei testem; denique cæleste regnum et æternam felicitatem. BOSSUET Dissertat. de Psal. Cap. i. ad fin.

† Heb. x. 1.

ness, and the glorious success and establishment of Christ's religion, no words were found so exquisitely adapted to the purpose, as those of David, in the xcviith, xcviiii, and other Psalms—"Sing unto the Lord a new song; sing unto the Lord, all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, and praise his name; be telling of his salvation from day to day. Declare his honour unto the heathen, his worship unto all people."—&c. &c. &c. In these, and the like Psalms, we continue to praise God, for all his spiritual mercies in Christ, to this day.

The Psalms, thus applied, have advantages, which no fresh compositions, however finely executed, can possibly have; since, besides their incomparable fitness to express our sentiments, they are, at the same time, memorials of, and appeals to former mercies and deliverances; they are acknowledgments of prophecies accomplished; they point out the connection between the old and new dispensations, thereby teaching us to admire and adore the wisdom of God displayed in both, and furnishing, while we read, or sing them, an inexhaustible variety of the noblest matter that can engage the contemplations of man.

Why is the mind more than ordinarily affected, and either melted into sorrow, or transported with joy, when, on the days set apart for the commemoration of our Saviour's birth, passion, resurrection, &c. the Proper Psalms are read, which the church hath appointed, following herein the directions of evangelists and apostles, and the usage of the early ages? Why, but because, by such appointment, we are necessarily put upon transferring our ideas from the complaints or exultations of David and Israel, to those of a suffering or glorified Messiah, of whose sufferings or glories we participate,

participate, as members of his mystical body? And how much more intense would be the effect, if, in the sermons preached on those occasions, such Proper Psalms were expounded to the people, and their Propriety evinced, as it might easily be? Discourses of this kind would make the hearts of the auditors to “burn within them,” and men would cease to wonder, that three thousand Jews were converted to the faith, by St Peter’s animated discourse on part of the sixteenth Psalm. Were believers once brought well acquainted with these Proper Psalms, they would be better enabled to study and apply the rest, which might likewise be explained to them, at different times, and certainly afford the finest subjects, on which a Christian orator can employ his eloquence. That this was done in the primitive church, we learn from the exposition of the Psalms left us by St Chrysostom in the east, and St Augustin in the west, those expositions still subsisting in the form of homilies, as delivered to their respective congregations. Is it not to be feared, that, for want of such instructions, the repetition of the Psalms, as performed by multitudes, is but one degree above mechanism? And is it not a melancholy reflection, to be made at the close of a long life, that, after reciting them, at proper seasons, through the greatest part of it, no more should be known of their true meaning and application, than when the Psalter was first taken in hand, at school!

Many sensible and well disposed persons, therefore, who, when they read or sing the Psalms desire to read and to sing “with the spirit and the understanding,” have long called for a commentary, which might enable them to do so; which might not only explain the literal sense of these di-
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vine compositions, and shew how they may be accommodated to our temporal affairs, as members of civil society; * but might also unfold the mysteries of the kingdom of God, which are involved in them, and teach their application to us, as members of that spiritual and heavenly society, of which Christ Jesus is the head, and for whose use, in every age, they were intended by their omniscient author. A work of this kind, though often desired, has never yet been executed, upon any regular and consistent plan. The survey of a province in Theology, hitherto almost unoccupied among the moderns, which promised a great deal of pleasing as well as profitable employment, gave birth to the attempt which hath been made to cultivate it, in the ensuing commentary; in which the author has only endeavoured to evince, by an induction of particulars, the truth of what so many learned and good men have asserted in general, concerning the prophetical, or evangelical import of the Psalter. Dr Hammond in the preface to his Annotations, tells us, he chose to leave every man to make applications of this kind for himself, finding he had work enough upon his hands, in the literal way. But so much having been done, by him, and other able critics, in that way, it seems to be now time, that something should be done in the other, and some

* A concern for the present peace and prosperity of the world, and of that kingdom in it to which we belong, ought ever to be entertained and cherished by the most exalted Christian. And if this part of the subject should, at any time, in the following work, appear to be but slightly touched upon, the reason is, because it lies obvious upon the surface, and has been so frequently inculcated by other expositors. Nor are mankind indeed so liable to forget the relation they bear to the world, as they are to overlook that which subsists between them and their Creator and Redeemer.

some directions, in a case, where directions cannot but be greatly wanted.

Very few of the Psalms, comparatively appear, to be simply prophetical, and to belong only to Messiah, without the intervention of any other person. Most of them, it is apprehended, have a double sense, which stands upon this ground and foundation, that the ancient patriarchs, prophets, priests, and kings, were typical characters, in their several offices, and in the more remarkable passages of their lives, their extraordinary depressions, and miraculous exaltations, foreshewing Him who was to arise, as the head of the holy Family, the great Prophet, the true Priest, the everlasting King. The Israelitish polity, and the law of Moses, were purposely framed after the example and shadow of things spiritual and heavenly; and the events, which happened to the ancient people of God, were designed to shadow out parallel occurrences, which should afterwards take place, in the accomplishment of man's redemption, and the rise and progress of the Christian church. For this reason, the Psalms composed for the use of Israel, and Israel's monarch, and by them accordingly used at the time, do admit of an application to us, who are now "the Israel of God,"* and to our Redeemer, who is the King of this Israel.†

Nor will this seem strange to us, if we reflect, that the same divine person, who inspired the Psalms, did also foreknow and pre-dispose all the events,

* Gal. vi. 16.

† That expressions and descriptions in human writings are often so framed, as to admit of a double sense, without any impropriety or confusion, is shewn by the very learned Mr MERRICK, in his excellent Observations on Dr BENSON'S Essay concerning the Unity of Sense, &c. subjoined to his Annotations on the Psalms.

events, of which he intended them to treat. And hence it is evident, that the spiritual sense is, and must be peculiar to the Scriptures; because of those persons and transactions only, which are there mentioned and recorded, can it be affirmed for certain, that they were designed to be figurative. And should any one attempt to apply the narrative of Alexander's expedition by Quintus Curtius, or the commentaries of Cæsar, as the New Testament writers have done, and taught us to do, the histories of the Old, he would find himself unable to proceed three steps with consistency and propriety. The argument, therefore, which would infer the absurdity of supposing the Scriptures to have a spiritual sense, from the acknowledged absurdity of supposing histories or poems merely human to have it, is inconclusive; the sacred writings differing, in this respect, from all other writings in the world, as much as the nature of the transactions which they relate differs from that of all other transactions, and the author who relates them differs from all other authors.

“ This double, or secondary sense of prophecy, was so far from giving offence to Lord Bacon, that he speaks of it with admiration, as one striking argument of its Divinity. *In sorting the prophecies of Scripture with their events, we must allow, says he, for that latitude, which is agreeable and familiar unto divine prophecies, being of the nature of the author, with whom a thousand years are but as one day; and therefore they are not fulfilled punctually at once, but have springing and germinant accomplishment through many ages, though the height, or fulness of them, may refer to some one age.*

“ But, that we may not mistake, or pervert this fine observation of our great philosopher, it may be
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be proper to take notice, that the reason of it holds in such prophecies only as respect the several successive parts of one system; which being intimately connected together, may be supposed to come within the view and contemplation of the same prophecy; whereas it would be endless, and one sees not on what grounds of reason we are authorized to look out for the accomplishment of prophecy, in any casual unrelated events of general history. The Scripture speaks of prophecy, as respecting Jesus, that is, as being one connected scheme of providence, of which the Jewish dispensation makes a part: so that here we are led to expect that *springing and germinant accomplishment*, which is mentioned. But, had the Jewish law been compleat in itself, and totally unrelated to the Christian, the general principle—that *a thousand years are with God but as one day*—would no more justify us in extending a Jewish prophecy to Christian events, because perhaps it was eminently fulfilled in them, than it would justify us in extending it to any other signally corresponding events whatsoever. It is only when the prophet hath one uniform connected design before him, that we are authorized to use this latitude of interpretation. For then the prophetic Spirit naturally runs along the several parts of *such* design, and unites the remotest events with the nearest: the stile of the prophet, in the mean time, so adapting itself to this double prospect, as to paint the near and subordinate event in terms that *emphatically* represent the distant and more considerable. So that, with this explanation, nothing can be more just or philosophical, than the idea which Lord Bacon suggests, of divine prophecy.

“ The great scheme of Redemption, we are now considering, being the only scheme in the plan of
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providence, which, as far as we know, hath been prepared and dignified by a continued system of prophecy, at least this being the only scheme to which we have seen a prophetic system applied, men do not so readily apprehend the doctrine of *double senses* in prophecy, as they would do, if they saw it exemplified in other cases. But what the history of mankind does not supply, we may represent to ourselves by many obvious suppositions; which cannot justify, indeed, such a scheme of things, but may facilitate the conception of it.” *

In allegories framed by man, the ground-work is generally fiction, † because of the difficulty of finding one true series of facts, which shall exactly represent another. But the great disposer of events, “known unto whom are all his works,” from the beginning to the end of time, was able to effect this; and the Scripture allegories are therefore equally true in the letter and in the spirit of them. The events signifying, no less than those signified, really happened, as they are said to have done. ‡ Why the allegories of this most perfect form, with which the book of God abounds, and which are all pregnant with truths of the highest import, should be treated with neglect and contempt, while the imperfect,

* Bishop HURD’s excellent Introduction to the Study of the Prophecies. Serm. iii.

† I say, “generally,” since, as the above cited Mr MERRICK justly observes, “It is possible (for example) in a complimentary address to a modern statesman, or general, to relate the actions of some ancient patriot, of the same character, in such a manner, that the parallel, intended to be drawn between them, shall be readily known, and the praises expressly bestowed on the one, be transferred, by the reader’s own application, to the other.”

‡ Neque propterea ab historico, sive literali atque immediato, ut aiunt, sensu aberrare nos oportet : quin eo erit clarior et fundatior secretioris illius intelligentiæ sensus, quo typum ipsum, hoc est, historiam ac literam figemus certius. BOSSUET Dissertat. in Psal. ad finem.

imperfect allegories of man's devising are universally sought after and admired, as the most pleasing and efficacious method of conveying instruction, it is not easy to say. Why should it not afford a believer as much delight, to contemplate the lineaments of his Saviour, portrayed in one of the patriarchs, as to be informed, that the character of Iapis was designed by Virgil to adumbrate that of Antonius Musa, physician to Augustus? Or why should not a discourse upon the Redemption of the Church, as foreshadowed by the Exodus of Israel, have as many admirers among Christians, as a dissertation, however ingeniously composed, on the descent of Æneas to the infernal regions, considered as typical of an initiation into the Eleusinian mysteries?

A learned, judicious, and most elegant writer of the present age hath stated and illustrated the subject we are now upon, with a felicity of thought and expression peculiar to himself. I shall endeavour to gratify the English reader with a view of his sentiments. The beauties of his language are not to be translated.

“It would be an arduous and adventurous undertaking to attempt to lay down the rules observed in the conduct of the Mystic Allegory; so diverse are the modes in which the Holy Spirit has thought proper to communicate his counsels to different persons upon different occasions; inspiring and directing the minds of the prophets according to his good pleasure; at one time vouchsafing more full and free discoveries of future events; while, at another, he is more obscure and sparing in his intimations. From hence, of course, ariseth a great variety in the Scripture usage of this kind of allegory, as to the manner in which the spiritual sense is couched under the c-

ther. Sometimes it can hardly break forth and shew itself at intervals through the literal, which meets the eye as the ruling sense, and seems to have taken entire possession of the words and phrases. On the contrary, it is much oftener the capital figure in the piece, and stands confessed at once by such splendor of language, that the letter, in its turn, is thrown into shades, and almost totally disappears. Sometimes it shines with a constant equable light; and sometimes it darts upon us on a sudden, like a flash of lightening from the clouds. But a composition is never more truly elegant and beautiful, than when the two senses, alike conspicuous, run parallel together through the whole poem, mutually corresponding with, and illustrating each other. I will produce an undoubted instance or two of this kind, which will shew my meaning, and confirm what has hitherto been advanced on the subject of the mystic allegory.

“The establishment of David upon his throne, notwithstanding the opposition made to it by his enemies, is the subject of the second Psalm. David sustains in it a twofold character, literal and allegorical. If we read over the Psalm first with an eye to the literal David, the meaning is obvious, and put out of all dispute by the sacred history. There is indeed an uncommon glow in the expression, and sublimity in the figures, and the diction is now and then exaggerated, as it were on purpose to intimate, and lead us to the contemplation of higher and more important matters concealed within. In compliance with this admonition, if we take another survey of the Psalm, as relative to the person and concerns of the spiritual David, a nobler series of events instantly rises to view, and the meaning becomes more evident, as well as exalted

alted. The colouring, which may perhaps seem too bold and glaring for the king of Israel, will no longer appear so, when laid upon his great antitype. After we have thus attentively considered the subjects apart, let us look at them together, and we shall behold the full beauty and majesty of this most charming poem. We shall perceive the two senses, very distinct from each other, yet conspiring in perfect harmony, and bearing a wonderful resemblance in every feature and lineament, while the analogy between them is so exactly preserved, that either may pass for the original, from whence the other was copied. New light is continually cast upon the phraseology, fresh weight and dignity are added to the sentiment, till gradually ascending from things below to things above, from human affairs to those which are divine, they bear the great important theme upwards with them, and at length place it in the height and brightness of heaven.

“ What hath been observed with regard to this Psalm, may also be applied to the seventy-second; the subject of which is of the same kind, and treated in the same manner. Its title might be, *The inauguration of Solomon*. The scheme of the allegory is alike in both; but a diversity of matter occasions an alteration in the diction. For whereas one is employed in celebrating the magnificent triumphs of victory, it is the design of the other to draw a pleasing picture of peace, and of that felicity, which is her inseparable attendant. The stile is therefore of a more even and temperate sort, and more richly ornamented. It aboundeth not with those sudden changes of the person speaking, which dazzle and astonish; but the imagery is borrowed from the delightful scenes with which creation

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chears the sight, and the pencil of the divine artist is dipped in the softer colours of nature. And here we may take notice how peculiarly adapted to the genius of this kind of allegory the parabolical stile is, on account of that great variety of natural images to be found in it. For as these images are capable of being employed in the illustration of things divine and human, between which there is a certain analogy maintained, so they easily afford that ambiguity which is necessary in this species of composition, where the language is applicable to each sense, and obscure in neither; it comprehends both parts of the allegory, and may be clearly and distinctly referred to one or the other.”*

The scheme of exposition so beautifully delineated, and illustrated in two instances by this truly valuable author, has been extended in theory, by another learned writer, to a great part of the Psalter; and that upon a principle deduced from the attributes of God, and the nature and design of the divine dispensations; though his own labours, like those of Dr Hammond, were employed chiefly in literal criticism. His reasoning is as follows—

“In this point (namely, the application of the Psalms to the mysteries of the Gospel) I am very clear. The Jews only, as a nation, acknowledged the one supreme God, under the name of Jehovah; they must be therefore his peculiar people. There is nothing capricious in this: they are correlates, and of necessity answer reciprocally to each other. Hence that singular intercourse between God and them. Hence, among other instances of his favour, his communication of himself to them by supernatural ways of Oracle, Inspiration, &c. When the acknowledgment of the one God branched itself, from
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* Bishop LEWIS on the Hebrew Poetry; Lect. xi.

this Jewish stock, over the face of the earth, and by that means he was become the God of all mankind, they must all, for the same reason, become his people. As God is ever the same, and his doings uniform, his conduct towards mankind must exactly be proportioned to his conduct towards the Jewish nation. Let us therefore place God in common over them both; and there will be—on one side, the Jewish nation; and on the other, mankind: on one side, Canaan, and a national prosperity; on the other, heaven, and human happiness: on one side, a redemption from Egyptian servitude, and national evils; on the other, a redemption of the whole human race from absolute evil: on one side, national crimes atoned by national ceremonies, sacrifices, priests; on the other, sins expiated by the one universal sacrifice of JESUS CHRIST: on one side, national and temporary favours, kings, prophets, &c. on the other, all this universal, and eternal: on one side, the Law, and every branch of it, adapted to a favourite nation; on the other, the everlasting Gospel, suited to all mankind. It is impossible, therefore, that God can say any thing to David, under the quality of king of this chosen nation, which he does not speak, at the same time, to JESUS CHRIST, as King of all the Elect; and that in a truer and nobler sense. To each of them he speaks in a sense adapted to the nature of their respective kingdoms. Nor is this latter a bare Accommodation of words, but the first and highest meaning of them, and which only, absolutely speaking, can be the true sense of God; the other being this sense, confined to a particular circumstance; in other words, an absolute truth, made history, and matter of fact. This is a principle, which shews, that, far from denying the Christian application, I
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consider the literal and historical sense only as a kind of vehicle for it." *

Upon this plan it is, that many of the Psalms are interpreted in the following sheets.

In such of them as were written by David, and treat of his affairs, that extraordinary person is considered as an illustrious representative of Messiah, who is more than once foretold under the name of David, and to whom are applied, in the New Testament, Psalms which do undoubtedly, in the letter of them, relate to David, and were composed on occasion of particular occurrences which befel him; a circumstance in theology, to be accounted for upon no other principle.

When, therefore, he describeth himself as one hated and persecuted without a cause; as one accused of crimes which he never committed, and suffering for sins, the very thoughts of which he abhorred; as one whose life was embittered by affliction, and his soul overwhelmed with sorrows; yet, withal, as one whom no troubles could induce to renounce his trust and confidence in the promises of God concerning him; when he repeateth his resolutions of adhering to the divine law, setting forth its various excellencies, and the comforts which it afforded him in the days of adversity; when he complaineth of that implacable malice, and unrelenting fury, with which he was pursued by Saul and his attendants, by Doeg the Edomite, by rebellious Absalom, traiterous Ahitophel, &c. and when, contrary to all appearances, he predicteth their destruction, with his own final exaltation; in expounding the Psalms of this cast and complexion, it hath been my endeavour to direct the reader's thoughts

* Preface to an Essay towards a New English Version of the Book of Psalms, by the Reverend Mr MUDGE.

thoughts to parallel circumstances, which present themselves in the history of the true David; his sorrows and sufferings; his resignation under them all; his obedience to the will of his Father; the temper and behaviour of his betrayers and murderers; the prophecies of judgments to be inflicted upon them, and of glory to be conferred upon him. As the Psalter was the liturgy of the Jewish church, of which our Lord was a member, and to which he therefore entirely conformed, during his abode and humiliation upon earth, he might pour forth his complaints, and “offer up his prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears,” * in the very words which his progenitor David had before used under his own troubles, but which were given by inspiration, with a view to the case of that blessed person, whom, in those troubles, he had the honour to prefigure.

Other Psalms there are, which disclose far different scenes. In them, the sorrows of David are at an end, and the day of his deliverance hath already dawned. The heavens are opened, and Jehovah appeareth in the cause of his afflicted servant. He descendeth from above, encompassed with clouds and darkness, preceded by fire and hail, proclaimed by thunder and earthquake, and attended by lightnings and whirlwinds. The mountains smoke, and the rocks melt before him; the foundations of the globe are uncovered, and the deep from beneath is moved at his presence. The adversary is discomfited and confounded; opposition, in the height of its career, feels the blast through all its powers, and instantly withers away. The Anointed of God, according to his original designation, is at length elevated to the throne; his sceptre is extended.

* Heb. v. 7.

tended over the nations; the temple is planned by him, and erected by his son; the services of religion are appointed in perfect order and beauty; Jerusalem becometh a praise in all the earth; and the kingdom is established in honour, peace, and felicity. If in Psalms of the former kind the holy Jesus might behold those persecutions and sufferings, under which he was to be humbled, and to mourn, during his pilgrimage here below; in Psalms of this latter sort, he might strengthen and console himself, as a man, "touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and tempted in all points like as we are," by viewing "the glory that should follow;" by contemplating the manifestation of the Father in favour of his beloved Son; his own joyful resurrection, triumphant ascension, and magnificent inauguration; the conversion of the world, and the establishment of the church; events, which were foreshadowed by those above mentioned; and to which when the strongest expressions made use of by the divine Psalmist are applied, they will no longer appear hyperbolical; especially if we bear in mind, that these prophetic descriptions wait for their full and final accomplishment at that day, when the mystical "body of Christ," having "filled up that which is behind of his afflictions*," shall also, amidst the pangs and convulsions of departing nature, arise from the dead, and ascend into heaven; where all the members of that body, which have been afflicted and have mourned with their Lord and Master, shall be comforted and glorified together with him. †

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* Coloss. i. 24.

† Neque prætermittendum illud Augustini passim; tunc Psalmos videri suavissimos, ac divinissima luce persusos, cum in his caput et membra, Christum et Ecclesiam, sive aperte propalatos, sive

In some of the Psalms David appears as one suffering for his sins. When man speaks of sin, he speaks of what is his own; and therefore, every Psalm, where sin is confessed to be the cause of sorrow, belongs originally and properly to us, as fallen sons of Adam, like David, and all other men. This is the case, of the fifty first, and the rest of those which are stiled Penitential Psalms, and have always been used in the church, as such. Sometimes, indeed, it happens, that we meet with heavy complaints of the number and burden of sins, in Psalms, from which passages are quoted in the New Testament as uttered by our Redeemer, and in which there seems to be no change of person, from beginning to end. We are assured, for instance, by the apostle, Heb. x. 5. that the sixth, seventh, and eighth verses of the fortieth Psalm, "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire, &c." are spoken by Messiah, coming to abolish the legal sacrifices, by the oblation of himself once for all. The same person, to appearance, continues speaking, and, only three verses after, complains in the following terms; "Innumerable evils have compassed me about, mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up: they are more than the hairs of my head, therefore my heart faileth me." So again, there are no less than five quotations from different parts of the sixty-ninth

sive latenter designatos intelligimus—Quare iterum atque iterum erigamus animos; atque ubi Davidem atque Solomonem; ubi Davidis hostes, Saulem, Achitophelem, alios; ubi bella et pacem, captivitatem, libertatem, ac cætera ejusmodi audimus; tum animo insignamus Christum, et Ecclesiam laboribus periculisque exercitam, atque inter adversa et prospera peregrinantem; tum sanctorum persecutores, non modo visibiles, sed etiam invisibiles illas atque æreas potestates, pugnasque in hac vita perpetes, ac secuturam postea pacem sempiternam. Bossuet Dissertat. in Psalm. ad Fin.

ninth Psalm, all concurring to inform us, that Christ is the speaker through that whole Psalm. Yet the fifth verse of it runs thus; "O God, thou knowest my foolishness, and my ~~own~~ guiltiness is not hid from thee." The solution of this difficulty given, and continually insisted on, in the writings of the Fathers, is this; that Christ, in the day of his passion, standing charged with the sin and guilt of his people, speaks of such their sin and guilt, as if they were his own, appropriating to himself those debts, for which, in the capacity of a surety, he had made himself responsible. The lamb which, under the law, was offered for sin, took the name ~~own~~ "guilt," because the guilt contracted by the offerer was transferred to that innocent creature, and typically expiated by its blood.* Was not this exactly the case, in truth and reality, with the Lamb of God? "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; but he bare our sins in his own body on the tree.† He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."‡ Christ and the church compose one mystical person, of which he is the head, and the church the body; and as the body speaks by the head, and the head for the body, he speaks of her sin, and she of his righteousness; which consideration is at the same time a key to any claims of righteousness made in the Psalms by her, and to any confession of sin made by him. This seems to be a satisfactory account of the matter. Such, at least, appears to have been the idea generally adopted and received, in the first ages of the Christian church; a circumstance, which, it is presumed, will be deemed a sufficient apology for the author, if in the explication of such

Nay,

* See Levit. v. 6.

† 1 Pet. ii. 22.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 21.

passages, he hath ventured to proceed accordingly. Nay, and even in reciting the Penitential Psalms, when the unhappy sufferer is ready to sink down under that weight of woe which sin hath laid upon him, if he will extend his thoughts, as he is sometimes directed to do, to that holy and most innocent person, who felt and sorrowed so much for us all, he will thereby furnish himself with the best argument for patience, and an inexhaustible source of comfort. Nor can it, indeed, well be imagined, that our blessed Lord, as a member of the Jewish church, and an attendant on the service of the synagogue, though conscious to himself of no sin, did not frequently join with his "brethren according to the flesh," in the repetition of the Penitential, as well as the other Psalms, on the days of humiliation and expiation, when the use of them might be prescribed. If, from his circumcision to his crucifixion, he "bare our sins in his own body;" why should it be thought strange, that he should confess them, on our behalf, with his own mouth?

The offence taken at the supposed uncharitable and vindictive spirit of the Imprecations, which occur in some of the Psalms, ceases immediately, if we change the imperative for the future, and read, not "LET THEM BE confounded," &c. but, "THEY SHALL BE confounded," &c. of which the Hebrew is equally capable. Such passages will then have no more difficulty in them, than the other frequent predictions of divine vengeance in the writings of the prophets, or denunciations of it in the gospel, intended to warn, to alarm, and to lead sinners to repentance, that they may fly from the wrath to come. This is Dr Hammond's observation; who very properly remarks, at the same time, that, in many places of this sort, as particularly in Psalm cix.

(and the same may be said of Ps. lxix.) it is reasonable to resolve, that Christ himself speaketh in the prophet; as being the person there principally concerned, and the completion most signal in many circumstances there mentioned; the succession especially of Matthias to the apostleship of Judas. It is true, that in the citation made by St Peter from Ps. cix. in Acts i. 20. as also, in that made by St Paul from Ps. lxix, in Rom. xi. 9. the imperative form is preserved; "LET his habitation be void, &c. LET their table be made a snare, &c." But it may be considered, that the apostles generally cited from the Greek of the LXX version; and took it as they found it, making no alteration, when the passage, as it there stood, was sufficient to prove the main point, which it was adduced to prove. If the imprecatory form be still contended for, all that can be meant by it, whether uttered by the prophet, by Messiah, or by ourselves, must be a solemn ratification of the just judgments of the Almighty against his impenitent enemies, like what we find ascribed to the blessed spirits in heaven, when such judgments were executed. Rev. xi. 17, 18. xvi. 5, 6, 7. See Merrick's Annotations on Ps. cix. and Witfii Miscellan. Sacr. Lib. I. Cap. xviii. Sect. 24. But, by the future rendering of the verbs, every possible objection is precluded at once. This method has therefore been adopted in the ensuing Commentary.

Of the Psalms which relate to Israel, some are employed in celebrating the mercies vouchsafed them, from their going forth out of Egypt, to their compleat settlement in Canaan. These were the constant standing subjects of praise and thanksgiving in the Israelitish church. But we are taught, by the writers of the New Testament, to consider this
part

part of their history as one continued figure, or allegory. We are told, that there is another spiritual Israel of God; other children of Abraham, and heirs of the promise; another circumcision; another Egypt, from the bondage of which they are redeemed; another wilderness, through which they journey; other dangers and difficulties, which there await them; other bread from heaven, for their support; and another rock to supply them with living water; other enemies to overcome; another land of Canaan, and another Jerusalem, which they are to obtain, and to possess for ever. In the same light are to be viewed the various provocations and punishments, captivities and restorations of old Israel afterwards, concerning which it is likewise true, that they “happened unto them for ensamples,” * types, or figures, “and were written for our admonition.” † Care has therefore been taken, to open and apply, for salutary purposes, the Psalms which treat of the above mentioned particulars.

What is said in the Psalms occasionally of the law and its ceremonies, sacrifices, ablutions, and purifications; of the tabernacle and temple, with the services therein performed; and of the Aaronical priesthood; all this Christians transfer to the oblation of Christ; to justification by his blood, and sanctification by his Spirit; to the true tabernacle, or temple, not made with hands; and to what was therein done for the salvation of the world, by Him who was, in one respect, a Sacrifice; in another a Temple; in a third, an High Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedeck. That such was the intention of these legal figures, is declared at large in the Epistle to the Hebrews: and they are

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of

* Gr. *τύποις*.

† I Cor. x. II.

of great assistance to us now, in forming our ideas of the realities to which they correspond. "Under the Jewish œconomy," says the excellent Mr Pascal, "truth appeared but in figure; in heaven it is open, and without a veil; in the church militant it is so veiled, as to be yet discerned by its correspondence to the figure. As the figure was first built upon the truth, so the truth is now distinguishable by the figure." The variety of strong expressions used by David, in the nineteenth, and the hundred and nineteenth Psalms, to extol the enlivening, saving, healing, comforting efficacy of a law, which, in the letter of it, whether ceremonial or moral, without pardon and grace, could minister nothing but condemnation, do sufficiently prove, that David understood the spirit of it, which was the Gospel itself*. And if any, who recited those Psalms, had not the same idea, it was not the fault of the law, or of the Psalms, of Moses, or of David, or of

* Hæc inter, veri et spirituales Judæi, hoc est, ante Christum Christi discipuli altiora cogitebant, et rerum cælestium Sacramenta venerati, novam Jerusalem, novum Templum, novam arcam intuebantur. BOSSUET. Differtat. in Psal. Cap. i.—Lex, juxta Spiritum accepta, ipsum erat Evangelium, sub veteribus figuris delitescens, et ceremoniarum velis obtectum, ab ipso quidem Mose (imprimis in Deuteronomio) aliquatenus et pro temporum ratione explicatum, a Prophetis vero succedentibus (ut visum est Divinæ Sapientiæ) dilucidius ostensum, demum a Christo et Apostolis plenissime et luce ipso Sole clariori patefactum. BULLI Opera per Grabe, p. 614.—If the Jews, as our Saviour tells them, "thought they had eternal life in their Scriptures," they must needs have understood them in a spiritual sense: and I know not what other spiritual sense, that should lead them to the expectation of eternal life, they could put on their Scriptures, but that prophetic or typical sense, which respected the Messiah. Jesus expressly asserts, at the same time, that their "Scriptures testified of Him." How generally they did so, he explained at large, in that remarkable conversation with two of his disciples, after his resurrection; when, "beginning at Moses and ALL the prophets, he expounded unto them in ALL the Scriptures the things concerning himself." HURD'S Introd. to the Study of the Prophecies. Sermon. ii.

of him who inspired both, but it was their own; as it is that of the Jews, at this hour, though their prophecies have now been fulfilled, and their types realized. "He that takes his estimate of the Jewish religion from the grossness of the Jewish multitude," as the last cited author observes, "cannot fail of making a very wrong judgment. It is to be sought for in the sacred writings of the prophets, who have given us sufficient assurance, that they understood the law not according to the letter. Our religion, in like manner, is true and divine in the gospels, and in the preaching of the apostles; but it appears utterly disfigured in those who maim or corrupt it."

Besides the figures supplied by the history of Israel, and by the law, there is another set of images often employed in the Psalms, to describe the blessings of Redemption. These are borrowed from the natural world, the manner of its original production, and the operations continually carried on in it. The visible works of God are formed to lead us, under the direction of his Word, to a knowledge of those which are invisible; they give us ideas, by analogy, of a new creation rising gradually, like the old one, out of darkness and deformity, until at length it arrives at the perfection of glory and beauty: so that while we praise the Lord for all the wonders of his power, wisdom, and love displayed in a system which is to wax old and perish, we may therein contemplate, as in a glass, those new heavens, and that new earth, of whose duration there shall be no end.* The sun, that fountain of life, and heart of the world, that bright leader

d 3

leader

* Read nature; nature is a friend to truth;
Nature is CHRISTIAN, preaches to mankind;
And bids dead matter aid us in our creed. YOUNG.

leader of the armies of heaven, enthroned in glorious majesty; the moon shining with a lustre borrowed from his beams; the air giving breath to all things to live and move; the interchanges of light and darkness; the course of the year, and the sweet vicissitude of seasons; the rain and the dew descending from above, and the fruitfulness of the earth caused by them; the bow bent by the hands of the most High, which compasseth the heaven about with a glorious circle; the awful voice of thunder, and the piercing power of lightening; the instincts of animals*, and the qualities of vegetables and minerals; the great and wide sea, with its unnumbered inhabitants; all these are ready to instruct us in the mysteries of faith, and the duties of morality.

They

* "I believe, a good natural philosopher might shew, with great reason and probability, that there is scarce beast, bird, reptile, or insect that does not, in each particular climate, instruct and admonish mankind of some necessary truth, for their happiness either in body or mind." Dr CHEYNE's Philosophical Conjectures on the Preference of vegetable Food. p. 73. That which a celebrated writer has observed concerning a Poet, may, perhaps, be equally applicable to a Divine—"To him nothing can be useless. Whatever is beautiful, and whatever is dreadful, should be familiar to his imagination: he should be conversant with all that is awfully vast, or elegantly little. The plants of the garden, the animals of the wood, the minerals of the earth, and meteors of the sky, should all concur to store his mind with inexhaustible variety: for every idea is useful for the inforcement or decoration of moral or religious truth; and he, who knows most, will have most power of diversifying his scenes, and of gratifying his reader with remote allusions, and unexpected instruction. By him therefore no kind of knowledge should be overlooked. He should range mountains and deserts for images and resemblances, and picture upon his mind every tree of the forest, and flower of the valley; the crags of the rock, and the mazes of the stream." RASSELAS, Chap. x. The reader may see this exemplified in some "Disquisitions on Select Subjects of Scripture," by my worthy friend, the Reverend Mr JONES, whose labours make it evident, that true Philosophy will ever be the handmaid of true Divinity.

They speak their Maker as they can,
But want and ask the tongue of man,

PARNEL.

The advantages of Meffiah's reign are represented in some of the Pfalms, under images of this kind. We behold a renovation of all things, and the world, as it were, new created, breaks forth into singing. The earth is crowned with sudden verdure and fertility; the field is joyful, and all that is in it; the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord; the floods clap their hands in concert, and ocean fills up the mighty chorus, to celebrate the advent of the great King.

Similar to these, are the representations of spiritual mercies by temporal deliverances from sickness, prison, danger of perishing in storms at sea, and from the sundry kinds of calamity and death, to which the body of man is subject; as also by scenes of domestic felicity, and by the flourishing state of well ordered communities, especially that of Israel in Canaan, which, while the benediction of Jehovah rested upon it, was a picture of heaven itself.—The foregoing, and every other species of the sacred imagery, if there be any other not hitherto included, it hath been the author's main endeavour to illustrate. And a view of what is done in this way, will, it is humbly hoped, afford some reason to think, there may not be that necessary connection, which a late noble writer has been pleased to suppose, between DEVOTION and DULNESS.

The Pfalms, which remain, are such as treat, in plain terms, without figures or examples, of wisdom and folly, righteousness and sin; the happiness produced by one, and the misery caused by the other; of particular virtues and vices; of the vanity of human life; of the attributes of God; of
that

that patience with which the faithful should learn to bear the sight of wickedness triumphant in this world, looking forward to the day of final retribution; and subjects of the like nature. As Psalms of this kind call for little in the expository way, the general doctrines or precepts implied in them, or suggested by them, are drawn forth in short reflections, attempted after the manner of those made by father Quesnel on each verse of the New Testament. The opportunity of doing this, where nothing else seemed to be required, and indeed of doing, upon every occasion, what did seem to be required in any way, was the reason for throwing the work into its present form, rather than that of a paraphrase, or any other. Some repetitions, in a performance of this sort, are unavoidable. But a commentary on the book of Psalms is not to be read all at once*; and it was thought better to give the exposition of each Psalm compleat in itself, than to refer the reader elsewhere; which, therefore, is only done, when passages of a considerable length occur in two Psalms, without any material difference.

Such is the method the author has taken, such the authorities upon which he has proceeded, and such the rules by which he has directed himself. If consistency and uniformity in the comment have been the result, they will afford, it is hoped, no contemptible argument on its behalf; since it is scarce possible to expound uniformly, on an erroneous

* The most profitable way of reading it, perhaps, would be, by small portions, often reviewing the text and the comment, and comparing them carefully together; at times when the mind is most free, vacant, and calm; in the morning, more especially to prepare and fortify it for the business of the day; and in the evening, to recompose, and set it in order; for the approaching season of rest.

neous plan, so great a variety of figurative language, as is to be found in the book of Psalms. †

Let us stop, for a moment, to contemplate the true character of these sacred hymns.

Greatness confers no exemption from the cares and sorrows of life. Its share of them frequently bears a melancholy proportion to its exaltation. This the Israelitish monarch experienced. He sought in piety that peace which he could not find in empire, and alleviated the disquietudes of state with the exercises of devotion.

His invaluable Psalms convey those comforts to others, which they afforded to himself. Composed upon particular occasions, yet designed for general use; delivered out as services for Israelites under the law, yet no less adapted to the circumstances of Christians under the Gospel; they present Religion to us in the most engaging dress; communicating truths which philosophy could never investigate, in a stile which poetry can never equal; while History is made the vehicle of Prophecy, and Creation lends all its charms to paint the glories of Redemption. Calculated alike to profit, and to please, they inform the understanding, elevate the affections,

† The student in Theology, who is desirous of farther information upon a subject so curious, so entertaining, and so interesting, as that of the figurative language of Scripture, the principles on which it is founded, and the best rules to be observed in the sober and rational interpretation of it, may find satisfaction, by consulting the following authors—

LOWIE'S Preface to his Commentary on the Prophets.

LOWIE Prælect. de Sacr. Poes. Heb. Prelect. iv.—xii.

PASCAL'S Thoughts, Sect. x—xiv.

HURD'S Introd. to the Study of the Prophecies, Serm. ii. iii. iv.

VITRINGA Observat. Sacr. Lib. vi. Cap. xx. et Lib. vii.

——— Præfat. ad Comment. in JESAIAM.

GLASSII Philologia Sacra, Lib. ii.

WIRSII Miscellan. Sacr. Tom. i. Lib. iii. Cap. iii. Lib. ii.

Dissertat. i. ii. Oeconom. Fœd. Lib. iv. Cap. vi—x.

WATERLAND'S General Preface to *Scripture vindicated*.

affections, and entertain the imagination. Indited under the influence of Him, to whom all hearts are known, and all events foreknown, they suit mankind in all situations, grateful as the manna which descended from above, and conformed itself to every palate. The fairest productions of human wit, after a few perusals, like gathered flowers, wither in our hands, and lose their fragrancy; but these unfading plants of paradise become, as we are accustomed to them, still more and more beautiful; their bloom appears to be daily heightened; fresh odours are emitted, and new sweets extracted from them. He who hath once tasted their excellencies, will desire to taste them yet again; and he who tastes them ofteneft will relish them best.

And now, could the author flatter himself, that any one would take half the pleasure in reading the following exposition, which he hath taken in writing it, he would not fear the loss of his labour. The employment detached him from the bustle and hurry of life, the din of politics, and the noise of folly; vanity and vexation flew away for a season, care and disquietude came not near his dwelling. He arose, fresh as the morning, to his task; the silence of the night invited him to pursue it; and he can truly say, that food and rest were not preferred before it. Every Psalm improved infinitely upon his acquaintance with it, and no one gave him uneasiness but the last; for then he grieved that his work was done. Happier hours than those which have been spent in these meditations on the Songs of Sion, he never expects to see in this world. Very pleasantly did they pass, and moved smoothly and swiftly along; for, when thus engaged, he counted no time. They are gone, but have
left

left a relish and a fragrance upon the mind, and the remembrance of them is sweet.

—But, alas, these are the fond effusions of parental tenderness. Others will view the production with very different eyes, and the harsh voice of inexorable criticism will too soon awaken him from his pleasing dream. He is not insensible, that many learned and good men, whom he does not therefore value and respect the less, have conceived strong prejudices against the scheme of interpretation here pursued; and he knows how little the generality of modern Christians have been accustomed to speculations of this kind; which, it may likewise, perhaps, be said, will give occasion to the scoffs of our adversaries, the Jews, and the Deists. Yet, if in the preceding pages it hath been made to appear, that the application of the Psalms to evangelical subjects, times, and circumstances, stands upon firm ground; that it may be prosecuted upon a regular and consistent plan; and that it is not only expedient, but even necessary, to render the use of them in our devotions rational and profitable; will it be presumption in him to hope, that, upon a calm and dispassionate review of the matter, prejudices may subside, and be done away? If men, in these days, have not been accustomed to such contemplations, is it not high time they should become so? Can they begin too soon to study, and make themselves masters of a science, which promises to its votaries so much entertainment, as well as improvement; which recommends the Scriptures to persons of true taste and genius, as books intended equally for our delight and instruction; which demonstrates the ways of celestial Wisdom to be ways of pleasantness, and all her paths to be peace indeed! From the most sober, deliberate, and attention

tive survey of the sentiments which prevailed, upon this point, in the first ages of the church, when the apostolical method of citing and expounding the Psalms was fresh upon the minds of their followers, the author cannot but be confident, that his Commentary, if it had then made its appearance, would have been universally received and approved, as to the general design of it, by the whole Christian world. And however the Jews, in the present state of alienation and unbelief, may reject and set at nought such applications of their Scriptures to our Messiah, and his chosen people, as they certainly will do; he is not less confident, that, whenever the happy and glorious day of their conversion shall come, and the veil shall be taken from their hearts, they will behold the Psalter in that light, in which he has endeavoured to place it.* As to the Deists, they, while they continue such, can have neither lot nor part in this matter; for giving no credit to the
 Scripture

* "If this appear to be the case in so many of the Psalms (namely, that they are predictive of MESSIAH) how strongly does it justify our Lord's appeal to them, as treating of Him? And what a noble argument may hence arise, for the conviction and conversion of that extraordinary people, to whom they were originally communicated, when once *the veil, that is on their hearts, shall be taken away*, as by the same spirit of prophecy we are assured it shall!" The Bishop of CARLISLE's *Theory of Religion*, P. 176, 6th edit. With what transports of zeal and devotion, of faith and love, will *they* recite these holy hymns, in the day when the whole body of the Jews, returning to the Lord their God, shall acknowledge their unparalleled crime in the murder of their King, and their penitential sorrow for the same, perhaps, as his Lordship intimates, in the words of the fifty-first Psalm; deliver me from BLOOD-GUILTINESS, O God, thou God of my salvation; and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. O Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise. For thou desirest not SACRIFICE, else would I give it; thou delightest not in BURNT-OFFERING. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. O do good in thy good pleasure to ZION; build thou the walls of JERUSALEM!"

Scripture account of things, either in the Old Testament, or the New, to discourse with them concerning a connection and analogy subsisting between the one and the other, is to reason about a fifth sense with a man who has only four. For the conviction both of Jews and Deists, other arguments are to be urged; arguments from undeniable miracles openly wrought, and plain prophecies literally fulfilled. Such proofs are “for them that believe not.” And such have been repeatedly urged, in their full force, by the many able champions, who have stood forth (success evermore attend their labours!) in defence of the Evidences of Christianity. Expositions and meditations, like those in the subsequent pages, serve not, nor are intended to serve, “for them who believe not, but for them who believe;” * who will exercise their faculties in discerning and contemplating the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, and who are going on unto perfection; to increase their faith, and inflame their charity; to delight them in prosperity, to comfort them in adversity, to edify them at all times. Such effects, the author doubts not, will be experienced by believers, who will read his book with an honest and good heart, with seriousness and attention; for though he humbly trusts it will not be deemed altogether unworthy a place in the libraries of the learned, he builds chiefly on that approbation which he is solicitous it should receive in the closets of the devout; as considering, that it is LOVE, heavenly LOVE, which “never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part: but

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* 1 Cor. xiv. 22.

when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." * They who find not the wished-for satisfaction in one portion, will find it in another; they who disapprove of an interpretation at the first reading, may, perhaps, approve of it at the second; and they who still continue to disapprove of some particulars, will not therefore disdain to accept the benefit of the rest. He has written to gratify no sect or party, but for the common service of all who call on the name of JESUS, wheresoever dispersed, and howsoever distressed, upon the earth. When he views the innumerable unhappy differences among Christians, all of whom are equally oppressed with the cares and calamities of life, he often calls to mind those beautiful and affecting words, which Milton represents Adam as addressing to Eve, after they had wearied themselves with mutual complaints and accusations of each other——

But rise; let us no more contend, nor blame
Each other, blam'd enough elsewhere; but strive
In offices of love, how we may lighten
Each other's burden in our share of woe.

B. x. V. 958.

Enough has been given to the arts of controversy. Let something be given to the studies of piety and a holy life. If we can once unite in these, our tempers may be better disposed to unite in doctrine. When we shall be duly prepared to receive it, "God may reveal even this unto us." To increase the number of disputes among us, is, therefore, by no means the intent of this publication. The author, having, for many years, accustomed himself to consider and apply the Psalms, while he recited them, according to the method now laid down, has never
failed

failed to experience the unspeakable benefit of it, both in public and in private; and would wish, if it so pleased God, that death might find him employed in meditations of this kind. * He has likewise frequently taken occasion, in the course of his ministry, to explain a Psalm, upon the same plan, from the pulpit; and whenever he has done so, whether the audience were learned or unlearned, polite or rustic, he has generally had the happiness to find the discourse, in an especial manner, noticed and remembered. But still, many may be of a different opinion, who may conscientiously believe the doctrines, and practise the duties of the Gospel, whether they see them shadowed out in the Psalms, or not. Such will enjoy their own liberty, and permit their brethren to do the same. Or, if they shall think it necessary to take up the polemical pen, he desires only to receive that treatment, which he has himself shewn to every writer, cited, or referred to by him. † Instead of engaging in a tedious, and, perhaps, unprofitable altercation upon the subject, he feels himself, at present, much rather inclined, in such a case, to follow, at his proper distance, the amiable example of his greatly respected Diocesan, who reprinted in England the objections made by a foreign Professor to some parts of his Lectures on the Hebrew Poetry, and left the

* “I have lost a world of time,” said the learned SALMASIUS, on his death-bed; “if I had one year more, I would spend it in reading DAVID’S PSALMS, and PAUL’S EPISTLES.”

† Detur igitur erratis meis venia: Ipse demum exemplo meo mihi prosum, qui neminem eorum, a quibus dissenserim, contumeliis affeci; qui non, vitio Criticorum, in diversæ sententiæ propugnatores acriter invecus sum; qui denique eam veniam antecessoribus meis libens tribui, quam ab iis, qui hæc in manus sumturi sint, velim impetrare. PEARCE in Præfat. ad edit. Cic. de Oratore.

Public to form its own judgment between them. *
From that Public, the author of the following work is now to expect the determination of his fate. Should its sentence be in his disfavour, nothing farther remains to be said, than that he has honestly and faithfully endeavoured to serve it to the utmost of his power, in the way, in which he thought himself best able; and to give the world some account of that time, and those opportunities, which, by the Providence of a gracious God, and the munificence of a pious Founder, he has long enjoyed, in the happy retirement of a College.

* “In his si quæ sunt, quæ mihi minus persuasit Vir Clarissimus, ea malui hoc modo libero Lectorum nostrorum judicio permittere, quam in disceptationem et controversiam, injucundam, et fortasse infructuosam, vocare.” LOWRIE, in Præf. ad edit. 2dam Prælect. de Sacra Poesi Hebræorum.—“Authors should avoid, as much as they can,” says another very learned critic, replies and rejoinders, the usual consequences of which are, loss of time, and loss of temper. Happy is he who is engaged in controversy with his own passions, and comes off superior; who makes it his endeavour, that his follies and weaknesses may die before him, and who daily meditates on mortality and immortality.” JORTIN’S Preface to his Remarks on Ecclesiastical History, p. xxxiv.

A
C O M M E N T A R Y
O N T H E
B O O K O F P S A L M S.

I DAY. MORNING PRAYER. PSALM I.

ARGUMENT.

This Psalm, which is generally looked upon by expositors as a preface, or introduction to the rest, describes the blessedness of the Righteous, consisting, ver. 1. negatively, in their abstaining from sin; 2. positively, in holy meditation on the Scriptures, productive of continual growth in grace, which 3. is beautifully represented under an image borrowed from vegetation; as 4. is the opposite of the unbelieving and ungodly, by a comparison taken from the threshing floor. The two last verses foretel the final issue of things, with respect to both good and bad men, at the great day.

VER. 1. *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.*

The Psalter, like the sermon on the mount, openeth with a "Beatitude," for our comfort and encouragement, directing us immediately to that happiness, which all mankind, in different ways, are seeking and enquiring after. All would secure themselves from the incursions of misery; but all do not consider, that misery is the offspring of sin, from which it is therefore necessary to be delivered and preserved, in order to become happy, or "blessed."

The variety of expressions, here used by David, intimateth to us, that there is a gradation in wickedness; and that he who would not persist in evil courses, or commence a scoffer at the mystery of godliness, must have no fellowship with bad men: since it is impossible for any one, who forsakes the right path, to say, whither he shall wander; and few, when they begin to “walk in the counsel of the ungodly,” propose finally to sit down in the “seat of the scornful.” O thou second Adam, who alone, since the transgression of the first, hast attained a sinless perfection, make thy servants “blessed,” by making them “righteous,” through thy merits and grace!

2. *But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in his law doth he meditate day and night.*

He who hath once brought himself to “delight” in the Scriptures, will find no temptation to exchange that pleasure for any which the world or the flesh can offer him. Such an one will make the lively oracles of God his companions by day and by night. He will have recourse to them for direction, in the bright and chearful hours of prosperity; to them he will apply for comfort, in the dark and dreary seasons of adversity. The enemy, when advancing to the assault, will always find him well employed, and will be received with—“Get thee behind me, Satan!” When the law of God is the object of our studies and meditations, we are conformed to the example of our Redeemer himself, who, as a man, while he “increased in stature,” increased likewise “in wisdom,” and grew powerful in the knowledge of the law which he was to fulfil, and of those prophecies which he was to accomplish; so that, at twelve years of age, he appeared to “have more understanding than all his teachers:

teachers : for the divine testimonies had been his meditation." Ps. cxix. 99.

3. *And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season ; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.*

By continual meditation in the sacred writings, a man as naturally improves and advances in holiness, as a " tree " thrives and flourishes in a kindly and well watered soil. All the " fruits " of righteousness shew themselves at their proper " season," as opportunity calls for them ; and his words, which are to his actions what the " leaves " are to the fruit, fall not to the ground, but are profitable, as well as ornamental. Every thing in him and about him serves the purpose for which it was intended ; his brethren are benefited by him, and his Maker is glorified. How eminently is this the case with that TREE OF LIFE, which Jehovah planted in the midst of his new paradise, by the waters of comfort ; a tree which sprung out of the earth, but its height reached to heaven, and its breadth to the ends of the world ; its shadow is for the protection, its fruits for the support, and its leaves for the healing of the nations. It flourishes in immortal youth, and blooms for ever in unfading beauty. See Rev. xxii. 2.

4. *The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff, which the wind driveth away.*

In the foregoing description of the righteous, all appeared verdant and fruitful, lovely and enduring ; but here, by way of contrast, we are presented with nothing but what is withered and worthless, without form or stability, blown about by every wind, and at length finally dispersed from the face of the earth, by the breath of God's displeasure, and driven

ven into the fire prepared for it. Such is the state, such the lot of the “ungodly;” and so justly are they compared to “chaff.”

5. *Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.*

A day is coming, when the divine Husbandman shall appear with his “fan in his hand,” and shall “thoroughly purge his floor.” The wheat, which shall stand the winnowing of that day, will be gathered into the celestial granary; while the chaff, for ever separated from it, shall be hurried out of the floor, and carried, by a mighty whirlwind, to its own place. Then shall there be a “congregation of the righteous,” in which “sinners shall not stand.” At present, wheat and chaff lie in one floor; wheat and tares grow in one field; good and bad fishes are comprehended in one net; good and bad men are contained in the visible church. Let us wait with patience God’s time of separation.

6. *For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.*

In the present scene of confusion, we may be, and often are deceived in the judgment we form of men. But it cannot be so with the Omniscient. “The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.” 2 Tim. ii. 19. Their good deeds are not unobserved, nor will they be forgotten by him. His eye seeth them in secret, and his hand will reward them openly, in the day of final retribution; when crowns of glory shall sparkle on the heads of the righteous, but shame and torment shall be the portion of the wicked; “the way of the ungodly shall perish.”

PSALM

P S A L M II.

ARGUMENT.

David, seated upon the throne of Israel, notwithstanding the opposition made against him, and now about to carry his victorious arms amongst the neighbouring heathen nations, may be supposed to have penned this, as a kind of inauguration Psalm. But that a “greater than David is here,” appears not only from the strength of the expressions, which are more properly applicable to Messiah, than to David himself; but also from the citations made in the New Testament; the appointment of the Psalm by the church to be read on Easter day; and the confessions of the Jewish Rabbies. It treats therefore, 1—3. of the opposition raised, both by Jew and Gentile, against the kingdom of Jesus Christ; 4—6. of his victory, and the confusion of his enemies; 7—9. after his resurrection, he preaches the Gospel, and 10—12. calls the kings of the earth to accept it; denouncing vengeance against those who shall not do so, and pronouncing a blessing on those who shall.

1. *Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?* 2. *The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD, and against his Anointed,* saying,

The true David is introduced, like his ancestor of old, expostulating with the nations, for their vain attempts to frustrate the divine decree in his favour. These two verses are cited, Acts iv. 25. and thus expounded—“Lord—of a truth against the holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,
for

for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." Persecution may be carried on by the people, but it is raised and fomented by kings and rulers. After the ascension of Christ, and the effusion of the Spirit, the whole power of the Roman empire was employed in the same cause, by those who, from time to time, swayed the sceptre of the world. But still, they who intended to extirpate the faith, and destroy the church, how many and how mighty so ever they might be, were found only to "imagine a vain thing." And equally vain will every imagination be, that exalteth itself against the counsels of God for the salvation of his people.

3. *Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.*

These words, supposed to be spoken by the powers in arms against Messiah, discover to us the true ground of opposition, namely, the unwillingness of rebellious nature to submit to the obligations of divine laws, which cross the interests, and lay a restraint upon the desires of men. Corrupt affections are the most inveterate enemies of Christ; and their language is "We will not have this man to reign over us," Doctrines would be readily believed, if they involved in them no precepts; and the church may be tolerated by the world, if she will only give up her discipline.

4. *He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the LORD shall have them in derision.*

By these and such like expressions, which frequently occur in the Scripture, we are taught, in a language which we understand, because borrowed from ourselves, and our manner of shewing contempt. how the schemes of worldly politicians appear to him, who, sitting upon his heavenly throne, surveys

surveys at a glance whatever men are doing, or contriving to do, upon the earth. This is the idea intended to be conveyed; and from it we are to separate all notions of levity, or whatever else may offend when applied to the Godhead, though adhering to the phrases, as in use among the sons of Adam. The same is to be said with regard to words which seem to attribute many other human passions and affections to the Deity: as, for instance, these which follow—

5. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. 6. Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.

The meaning is, that by pouring out his indignation upon the adversaries of Messiah, as formerly upon those of David, God would no less evidently convict and reprove their folly and impiety, than if he had actually thus spoken to them from his eternal throne above; “Yet, notwithstanding all your rage against him, have I raised from the dead, and exalted, as head of the church, my appointed King Messiah; in like manner as I once set his victorious representative David upon my holy hill of Sion, in the earthly Jerusalem, out of the reach of his numerous and implacable enemies.” Let us reflect, for our comfort, that He who raised up his son Jesus, has promised to raise up us also who believe in him; and that the world can no more prevent the exaltation of the members, than it could prevent that of the Head.

7. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.

Jesus, for the suffering of death, crowned with honour and immortality, upon the holy hill of Zion, in the new Jerusalem, now “declares the decree,” or preaches the Gospel of the everlasting covenant.

His

His part in the covenant was performed by keeping the law, and dying for the sins of men. Nothing therefore remained, but the accomplishment of the promise made to him by the Father, upon those conditions. One part of this promise was fulfilled, saith St Paul, "in that he had raised up Jesus again; as it is written in the second psalm, "Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee." Acts xiii. 33. Another part was fulfilled at the ascension of Christ, and his inauguration to an eternal kingdom, and an unchangeable priesthood, as the true Melchisedek, King of righteousness, King of peace, and Priest of the most high God. The next article in the covenant, on the Father's side, was the enlargement of Messiah's spiritual kingdom, by the accession of the nations to the church. And accordingly, this was the next thing which "Jehovah said unto him," after having proclaimed his Sonship and pre-eminence; as we find by the following verse.

8. *Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession.*

Christ was to enter upon the exercise of the intercessorial branch of his priestly office, with a request to the Father, that the "heathen world might be given for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession," in return for the labours he had undergone, and the pains he had endured; as also to supply the place of the Jews, who were his original "inheritance and possession," but were cast off, because of unbelief. That such request was made by Christ, and granted by the Father, the person who writes this, and he who reads it, in a once Pagan, but now Christian island, are both witnesses.

9. *Thou*

9. *Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.*

The irresistible power and inflexible justice of Christ's kingdom are signified by his "ruling with a rod of iron;" the impotence of those who presume to oppose him, is compared to that of "a potter's vessel," which must fly in pieces, at the first stroke of the iron rod. The power of Christ will be manifested in all, by the destruction either of sin, or the sinner. The hearts which now yield to the impressions of his spirit, are broken only in order to be formed anew, and to become vessels of honour, fitted for the Master's use. Those which continue stubborn and hardened, must be dashed in pieces by the stroke of eternal vengeance.

10. *Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth.* 11. *Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.*

The decree of the Father, concerning the kingdom of the Son, being thus promulgated by the latter, an exhortation is made to the kings of the earth, that they would learn true wisdom, and suffer themselves to be instructed unto salvation; that they would bow their sceptres to the cross of Jesus, and cast their crowns before his throne; esteeming it a far greater honour, as well as a more exalted pleasure, to serve Him, than to find themselves at the head of victorious armies, surrounded by applauding nations.

12. *Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little; blessed are all they that put their trust in him.*

Christ beseeches kings, no less than their subjects, to be reconciled to him, and by him to the Father; since a day is at hand, when mighty men shall have no distinction, but that of being mightily

tily tormented. And then will be seen the “blessedness” of those who put their trust in” the Lord Jesus. For when the glory of man shall fade away as the short lived flower of the field, and when all, that is called great and honourable in princes, shall be laid low in the dust, he shall give unto his faithful servants a crown without cares, and a kingdom which cannot be moved.

PSALM III.

ARGUMENT.

This Psalm is said to have been composed by David, when he fled from his Son Absalom. Thus circumstanced, he expresses himself in terms well adapted to the parallel case of the Son of David, persecuted by rebellious Israel; as also to that of his church, suffering tribulation in the world.

1, 2. He complains, in much anguish, of the multitude of his enemies, and of the reproaches cast upon him, as one forsaken by God; but 3. declares, notwithstanding, his sure trust in the divine promises; 4, 5. he relates the success of his prayers, 6—8. derides the impotent malice of his enemies, and ascribes salvation to Jehovah.

1. LORD, *how are they increased that trouble me? Many are they that rise up against me.*

David is astonished to find, that “the hearts of the “men of Israel are after Absalom;” 2 Sam. xv. 13. that his counsellors are revolted, and his friends falling off continually; and that the king of Israel is forced to leave his capital, mourning and weeping. Thus, led forth out of Jerusalem by his own children in arms against him, the holy Jesus went, forsaken and sorrowing, to the cross, in the day of trouble. Thus is the church oftentimes opposed and betrayed by her sons, and the Christian

Christian by his passions and affections. So true it is, that "A man's foes are they of his own household." But he, who by prayer engages the assistance of Jehovah, will rise superior to them all.

2. *Many there be which say of my soul, there is no help for him in God.*

Affliction and desertion are two very different things, but often confounded by the world. Shimei reviled David, as reprobated by heaven; and the language of the Shimeis afterward, concerning the Son of David, was, "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him," See 2 Sam. xvi. 8. Matt. xxvii. 43. The fearful imaginations of our own desponding hearts, and the suggestions of our crafty adversary, frequently join to help forward this most dangerous temptation, in the hour of sorrow. What therefore hath faith to offer? We shall hear—

3. *But thou, O LORD, art a shield for me : my glory, and the lifter up of my head.*

Such is the answer of David, and of all the saints, but above all, of the King of saints, to the temptation before mentioned. Jehovah is a "shield" against this, and all other fiery darts, shot by Satan and his associates: he is the "glory" of Christ and the church, with which they will one day be seen invested, though for a season it appear not to the world, any more than did the royalty of David, when, weeping and barefoot, he went up mount Olivet: 2 Sam. xv. 30. the same Jehovah is "the lifter up of our heads," by the gift of holy confidence, and the hope of a resurrection, through that of Jesus Christ, prefigured by the triumphant and happy return of David to Jerusalem.

4. *I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill.*

David, driven from Jerufalem, still looked and prayed towards the “holy hill” of Sion. Christ, when a stranger on the earth, “made supplication, with strong crying,” to his Father in heaven. Christ was heard for his own sake; David was heard, and we shall be heard through him.

5. *I laid me down and slept; I awaked, for the LORD sustained me.*

Behold David, in the midst of danger, sleeping without fear; secure, through the divine protection, of awaking to engage and vanquish his enemies. Behold the Son of David composing himself to his rest upon the cross, that bed of sorrows; and commending his spirit into the Father’s hands, in full confidence of a joyful resurrection, according to the promise, at the time appointed. Behold this, O Christian, and let faith teach thee how to sleep, and how to die; while it assures thee, that as sleep is a short death, so death is only a longer sleep; and that the same God watches over thee, in thy bed, and in thy grave.

6. *I will not be afraid of ten thousand of people, that have set themselves against me round about.*

Faith, revived and invigorated by prayer, and fixed on God alone, is a stranger to fear, in the worst of times. The innumerable examples of saints rescued from tribulation, and above all, the resurrection of the Son of God from the dead, render the believer bold as a lion, although the name of his adversary be, “legion.”

7. *Arise, O LORD, save me, O my God; for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.*

The

The church, through Christ, prayeth in these words of David, that Jehovah would arise, as of old time, in the power of his might; that he would finally break the power of Satan and his adherents; pluck the spoil out of the jaws of those beasts of prey; and work that glorious deliverance for the members, which is already wrought for the Head of the body mystical.

8. *Salvation* belongeth, or, *be ascribed unto the LORD; thy blessing* is, or, *be upon thy people.*

The Psalm ends with an acknowledgment, which ought always to fill the hearts, and upon every proper occasion, to flow from the mouth of a Christian; namely, that “salvation” is not to be had from man, from the kings of the earth, or the gods of the heathen, from saints or angels, but from Jehovah alone; to whom alone, therefore, the glory should be ascribed. If He will save, none can destroy; if He will destroy, none can save. Let Balak, then, curse Israel, or hire Balaam to curse them for him; be but “thy blessing,” O Lord, upon thy people, and it sufficeth.

P S A L M IV.

ARGUMENT.

The person speaking in this Psalm 1. prayeth to be heard by God; 2. convinceth the world of sin; 3. declareth the righteous to be under the divine protection; 4, 5. prescribeth solitude and meditation, as the proper means to lead men to repentance and faith; 6. sheweth, that in God alone peace and comfort are to be found; and 7. how superior the joys of the Spirit are to those of sense; 8. reposeth himself, in full assurance of faith, on the loving kindness of the Lord.

1. *Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness; thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.*

The church, like David, "calls" aloud, as one in great affliction, for God's assistance; she addresses him as the "God of her righteousness," as the fountain of pardon and grace; she reminds him of that spiritual liberty, and "enlargement" from bondage, which he had purchased for her, and oftentimes wrought in her; and, conscious of her demerits, makes her prayer for "mercy."

2. *O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame? How long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing, or falsehood?*

If the Israelitish monarch conceived he had just cause to expostulate with his enemies, for despising the royal majesty, with which Jehovah had invested his Anointed; of how much severer reproof shall they be thought worthy, who blaspheme the essential "glory" of King Messiah, which shines forth by his Gospel in the church? Thou, O Christ, art everlasting Truth; all is "vanity and falsehood," transient and fallacious, but the love of thee!

3. *But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself; the LORD will hear when I call upon him.*

Be the opinions, or the practices of men what they will, the counsel of the Lord that shall stand. Is David "set apart" for the kingdom of Israel? Saul shall not be able to detain, nor Absalom to wrest it from him. Is Messiah ordained to be King of the Israel of God? Death and hell shall not prevent it. Are his disciples appointed to reign with him? Infallibly they shall. Our intercessor is already on high; and for his sake, "the Lord will hear

hear us when we call upon him." What, then, can be said for us, if we neglect to call upon him?

4. *Stand in awe, Heb. tremble, and sin not; commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.*

The enemies of Christ, as well as those of David are here called to repentance; and the process of conversion is described. The above mentioned consideration of the divine counsel, and the certainty of its being carried into execution, by the salvation of the righteous, and the confusion of their enemies, makes the wicked "tremble." "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom:" it arrests the sinner in his course, and he "sins not;" he goes no farther in the way of sin, but stops, and reflects upon what he has been doing; he "communes with his own heart upon his bed, and is still;" his conscience suffers him not to rest in the night, but takes the advantage of solitude and silence, to set before him his transgressions, with all the terrors of death and judgment; stirring him up to confess the former, and deprecate the latter, with unfeigned compunction and sorrow of heart; to turn unto the Lord, and do works meet for repentance; to learn to do good, as well as to cease from doing evil.

5. *Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the LORD.*

The Jews are no longer to offer the shadowy sacrifices of their law, since He, who is the substance of them all, is come into the world. The Gentiles are no more to offer their idolatrous sacrifices, since their idols have fallen before the Cross, But returning sinners, whether Jews or Gentiles, are to offer the same sacrifices of" evangelical "righteousness;" not "putting their trust" in them, but "in the Lord" Jesus, through whose Spirit they
are

are enabled to offer, and through whose blood their offerings are acceptable unto God. Faith, hope, and charity mutually strengthen each other, and compose "a threefold cord;" which "is not easily broken."

6. *There be many that say, who will shew us any good? LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us?*

The two former verses were addressed to rebellious sinners, inviting them to repentance and reformation. This seems to relate to the righteous, who, in times of calamity and persecution, like the friends of distressed David, are tempted to despond, on seeing no end of their troubles. The Psalmist therefore prescribes prayer to all such, as an antidote against the temptation; he directs them, in the darkest night, to look towards heaven, nor doubt the return of day when the rising sun shall diffuse light and salvation, and sorrow and sighing shall fly away. How many are continually asking the question in this verse? How few applying to Him, who alone can give an answer of peace and comfort!

7. *Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and wine increased.*

No sooner is the prayer preferred, but the answer is given; and the devout soul declares herself to experience a joy in the midst of tribulation, far superior to the joy with which men rejoice in the time of harvest, or that of vintage; a joy, bright and pure, as the regions from whence it descends. Such is the difference between the bread of earth, and that of heaven; between the juice of the grape, and the cup of salvation. Teach us, O Lord, to discern this difference, and to chuse aright.

8. *I will both lay me down in peace and sleep; for thou, LORD, only makest me to dwell in safety.*

This

This conclusion affords ample matter for profitable and delightful meditation, if it be considered, first, as spoken by David, or any other believer, when lying down to rest, full of the joys of a good conscience, and faith unfeigned; secondly, as pronounced by the true David, when composing himself to his rest, in certain hope of a resurrection. And happy the Christian, who having nightly, with this verse, committed himself to his bed, as to his grave, shall at last, with the same words, resign himself to his grave, as to his bed, from which he expects in due time to arise, and sing a morning hymn, with the children of the resurrection.

P S A L M V.

ARGUMENT.

The Psalmist, in affliction, 1—3. continues, and resolves to continue instant in prayer; 4—6. declares the irreconcilable hatred which God bears to sin, and 7. his own confidence of being accepted; 8. he petitions for grace to direct and preserve him in the way; 9. sets forth the wickedness of his enemies; 10. foretells their punishment, and 11, 12. the salvation of the faithful.

1. *Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation, or, my dove like mournings.*

Although nothing can really hinder or divert the divine attention, yet God is represented as “not hearing,” when either the person is unacceptable, or the petition improper, or when he would thoroughly prove the faith and patience of the petitioner. Christ, the church, and the believing soul, are all in Scripture stiled “doves,” from their possessing the amiable properties of that bird of meekness and innocence, purity and love. The “mournings”

nings" of such are always heard and attended to in heaven.

2. *Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King and my God : for unto thee will I pray.*

The voice of the suppliant's cry will be in proportion to the sense which he hath of his sin. Whom should a subject solicit, but his King? to whom should a sinner pray, but to his God? Let us often think upon the strong cryings of him, who suffered for the sins of the world, and upon that intercession, by which the pardon of those sins was procured.

3. *My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer, Heb. dispose, or set myself in order, unto, or for thee, and will look up.*

He who is good in earnest, and hath his heart fully bent upon the work of salvation, like other skilful and diligent artificers, will be "early" in his application to it; he will get the start of the world, and take the advantage of the "sweet hour of prime," to "dispose," and "set himself in order," for the day. What is a slothful sinner to think of himself, when he reads, concerning the holy Jesus, that "in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed!" Mark i. 35.

4. *For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness; neither shall evil dwell with thee.*

The Psalmist was encouraged to make his early prayers to God in the day of trouble, upon this consideration, that his righteous cause must finally prosper, and the divine counsels be accomplished in his exaltation, and the depression of his enemies, who were likewise the enemies of God. The same was the case and the confidence of a suffering Messiah; and such is that of his church and people in the world.

world, where “wickedness” may prosper, and “evil” not only live, but reign. Nevertheless, we know that “God hath no pleasure” in them, nor shall they “dwell with him,” as we hope to do.

5. *The foolish, Heb. mad, shall not stand in thy sight; for thou hatest all workers of iniquity.* 6. *Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing, or falsehood; the LORD doth abhor both the blood thirsty and deceitful man.*

No objects of the senses can be so nauseous to them, as the various kinds of sin are in the sight of God. O could we but think, as he does, concerning these, we should rather chuse “madness” than transgression, and as soon fall in love with a plague-sore, as a temptation. “Falsehood, blood-thirstiness, and deceitfulness,” are marked out as characteristical of the enemies of David, of Christ, and the church; and history evinces them so to have been. Let us never go within the infection of such pestilential crimes.

7. *But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: and in thy fear will I worship towards thy holy temple.*

Wisdom, righteousness, truth, mercy, and sincerity, form a character the reverse of that drawn in the preceding verses, and such an one as God will accept, when appearing before him in his house, and offering with humility and reverence, the sacrifices of the new law, as David did those of the old, through faith in Him who alone filled up the character, and procured acceptance for believers, and their oblations.

8. *Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness, because of mine enemies: make thy way straight before my face.*

The child of God, admitted into his holy temple, there prefers this petition, praying to be led by the divine Spirit in a course of holy obedience, all impediments

pediments being removed out of the way, which otherwise might obstruct the progress, or cause the fall of one beginning to walk in the path of life; of one who had many "enemies" ready to contrive, to take advantage of, to rejoice and triumph in his ruin. Thus a man's enemies, while they oblige him to pray more fervently, and to watch more narrowly over his conduct, oftentimes become his best friends.

9. *For there is no faithfulness in their mouth, their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre, they flatter with their tongue.*

A part of this verse is cited, Rom. iii. 13. together with several other passages from the Psalms and prophets, to evince the depravity of mankind, whether Jews or Gentiles, till justified by faith, renewed by grace. It is plain, therefore, that the description was designed for others, besides the enemies of the literal David, and is of more general import, reaching to the world of the ungodly, and to the enemies of all righteousness, as manifested in the person of Messiah, and in his church. The charge brought against these is, that "truth" and fidelity were not to be found in their dealings with God or each other; that their "inward parts" were very wickedness; their first thoughts and imaginations were defiled, and the stream was poisoned at the fountain; that their "throat was an open sepulchre," continually emitting, in obscene and impious language, the noisome and infectious exhalations of a putrid heart, entombed in a body of un; and that, if ever they put on the appearance of goodness, they "flattered with their tongue," in order the more effectually to deceive and destroy. So low is human nature fallen! "O thou Adam, what hast thou done? For though it was thou that
finned,

finned, thou art not fallen alone, but we all that come of thee." 2 Esd. vii. 48.

10. *Destroy them not, O God; let them fall by their own counsels: cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions, for they have rebelled against thee.*

Concerning passages of this imprecatory kind in the book of Psalms, it is to be observed, that they are not spoken of private and personal enemies, but of the opposers of God and his Anointed; nor of any among these, but the irreclaimable and finally impenitent; and this by way of prediction, rather than imprecation; which would appear, if the original verbs were translated uniformly in the future tense, as they might be, and indeed, to cut off all occasion for them which desire it, should be translated. The verse before us would then run thus — "Thou wilt destroy them, O God; they shall perish by their own counsels: thou wilt cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions, for they have rebelled against thee." The words, when rendered in this form, contain a prophecy of the infatuation, rejection, and destruction of such as should obstinately persevere in their opposition to the counsels of heaven, whether relating to David, to Christ, or to the church. The fate of Ahitophel and Absalom, of Judas and the Jews, should warn others not to offend after the same example.

11. *But let all those that trust in thee rejoice; let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee. Heb. All they that trust in thee shall rejoice, &c.*

As the last verse foretold the perdition of the ungodly, this describes the felicity of the saints; who, trusting in God, rejoice evermore, and sing aloud in the church the praises of their Saviour and mighty defender; the love of whose name fills their

hearts with joy unspeakable, while they experience the comforts of grace, and expect the rewards of glory.

12. *For thou, LORD, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield.*

The “blessing” of God descends upon us through Jesus Christ “the righteous,” or “just one,” as of old it did upon Israel through David, whom, for the benefit of his chosen, God protected, delivered and placed upon the throne. Thou, O Christ, art the righteous Saviour, thou art the king of Israel, thou art the blessed of Jehovah, the fountain of blessing to all believers, and thy “favour” is the defence and protection of the church militant.

I DAY. EVENING PRAYER. PSALM VI.

ARGUMENT.

This is the first of those Psalms which are stiled penitential. It contains 1. a deprecation of eternal vengeance, and 2, 3. a petition for pardon; which is enforced from the consideration of the penitent's sufferings; 4. from that of the divine mercy; 5. from that of the praise and glory which God would fail to receive, if man were destroyed; 6, 7. from that of the penitent's humiliation and contrition; 8—10. the strain changes into one of joy and triumph, upon the success and return of the prayer.

1. *O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.*

Let us suppose a sinner awakened to a true sense of his condition, and looking around him for help. Above is an angry God preparing to take vengeance; beneath, the fiery gulf ready to receive him; without him, a world in flames; within, the gnawing worm. Thus situated, he begins, in extreme agony of

of spirit, "O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, "neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure." He expects that God will "rebuke" him, but only prays that it may not be in "anger," finally to destroy him; he desires to be chastened, but chastened in fatherly love, not in the "hot displeasure" of an inexorable judge. As often as we are led thus to express our sense of sin, and dread of punishment, let us reflect on Him, whose righteous soul, endued with a sensibility peculiar to itself, sustained the sins of the world, and the displeasure of the Father.

2. *Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am weak; O LORD, heal me, for my bones are vexed, Heb. shaken, or made to tremble.*

The penitent intreats for mercy, first, by representing his pitiable case, under the image of sickness. He describes his soul as deprived of all its health and vigour, as languishing and fainting, by reason of sin, which had eat out the vitals, and shaken all the powers and supporters of the spiritual frame, so that the breath of life seemed to be departing. Enough however was left, to supplicate the healing aid of the God of mercy and comfort; to petition for oil and wine at the hands of the physician of spirits. How happy is it for us, that we have a physician, who cannot but be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, seeing that he himself once took them upon him, and suffered for them, even unto the death of the cross, under which he "fainted," and on which "his bones were vexed."

3. *My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O LORD, how long?*

Another argument is drawn from the sense which the penitent hath of this his woeful condition, and the consternation and anxiety produced thereby in his troubled mind. These cause him to fly for re-

fuge to the hope set before him. "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick;" he is therefore beautifully represented as crying out, with a fond and longing impatience, "but thou, O LORD, how long?" His strength is supposed to fail him, and the sentence is left imperfect. What, blessed Jesus, were thy "troubles," when to thy companions thou saidst, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death!" By those thy sorrows we beseech thee to hear the voice of thine afflicted church, crying to thee from the earth, "My soul also is sore troubled; but thou, O LORD, how long?"

4. *Return, O LORD, deliver my soul; O save me for thy mercy's sake.*

A third argument is formed upon the consideration of God's "mercy;" for the sake of which, as it is promised to penitents, he is requested to "return," or to turn himself towards the suppliant; to lift up his countenance on the desponding heart; to "deliver it from darkness and the shadow of death, and to diffuse around it light and life, salvation, joy, and gladness, like the sun in the morning, when he revisits a benighted world, and calls up the creation, to bless the maker of so glorious a luminary, so bright a representative of redeeming Love.

5. *For in death there is no remembrance of thee; in the grave who shall give thee thanks!*

The fourth argument proceeds upon a supposition, that God created man for his own glory, which, therefore, would be so far diminished, if man were permitted finally to perish. The body could not glorify God, unless raised from the dead; nor could the soul, if left in hell. The voice of thanksgiving is not heard in the grave, and no hallelujahs are sung in the pit of destruction. This plea, now urged by the church, was urged for her without all doubt, by
her

her Saviour in his devotions, and prevailed in his mouth, as, through him, it will do in her's.

6. *I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears.*

The penitent is supplied with a fifth argument, by the signs and fruits of a sincere repentance, which put forth themselves in him. Such was his sorrow, and such revenge did he take upon himself, that for every idle word he now poured forth a groan, like him that is in anguish through extremity of bodily pain, untill he was "weary," but yet continued groaning; while the sad remembrance of each wanton folly drew a tear from the fountains of grief. The all righteous Saviour himself wept over sinners: sinners read the story, and yet return again to their sins!

7. *Mine eye is consumed because of grief: it waxeth old because of all mine enemies.*

Grief exhausts the animal spirits, dims the eyes, and brings on old age before its time. Thus it is said, concerning the man of sorrows, that "many were astonished at him, his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men." Isai. lii. 14. How long, in these times, might youth and beauty last, were godly sorrow their only enemy?

8. *Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity, for the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping.* 9. *The LORD hath heard my supplication, the LORD will hear, or, hath heard my prayer.*

Repentance having performed her task, having taught her votary to forsake sin, and to renounce all communication with sinners, now gives place to faith, which appears with the glad tidings of pardon and acceptance, causing the penitent to rejoice in God his Saviour, with joy unspeakable; and inspi-

ring his heart with vigour and resolution to run his course in the way of righteousness. Risen to newness of life, he defies the malice, and predicts the final overthrow of his spiritual adversaries.

10. *Let all mine enemies, or, all mine enemies shall be ashamed, and sore vexed; let them, or, they shall return, and be ashamed suddenly.*

Many of the mournful Psalms end in this manner, to instruct the believer, that he is continually to look forward, and solace himself with beholding that day, when his warfare shall be accomplished; when sin and sorrow shall be no more; when sudden and everlasting confusion shall cover the enemies of righteousness; when the sackcloth of the penitent shall be exchanged for a robe of glory, and every tear become a sparkling gem in his crown; when to sighs and groans shall succeed the songs of heaven, set to angelic harps, and faith shall be resolved into the vision of the Almighty.

PSALM VII.

ARGUMENT.

David is said to have composed this Psalm concerning the words, or the matter of Cush the Benjamite. Whether Saul, or Shimei, or any one else, be intended under this name, it is sufficiently clear, that David had been maliciously aspersed and calumniated by such a person; that the Psalm was written to vindicate himself from the imputation, whatever was the nature of it; and consequently, may be considered as the appeal of the true David and his disciples, against the grand Accuser and his associates. The person speaking 1, 2. declares his trust to be in God; 3—5. protests his innocence; 6—8. desires that judgment may be given in the cause: 9, 10. prays
for

for the abolition of sin, and the full establishment of righteousness; 11—13. sets forth the divine judgments against sinners; 14—16. describes the beginning, progress, and end of sin, with 17. the joy and triumph of the faithful.

1. *O LORD my God, in thee do I put my trust; save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me.*

To a tender and ingenuous spirit, the “persecution” of the tongue is worse than that of the sword, and with more difficulty submitted to; as indeed a good name is more precious than bodily life. Believers in every age have been persecuted in this way; and the King of saints often mentions it as one of the bitterest ingredients in his cup of sorrows. Faith and prayer are the arms with which this formidable temptation must be encountered, and may be overcome. The former assures us, that God can “save and deliver” us from it; the latter induces him so to do.

2. *Lest he tear my soul like a lion, rending it in pieces, while there is none to deliver.*

The “lion,” of whom David stood in fear, was probably Saul, roused, by a false accusation, to destroy him. The rage of tyrants is often in the same manner excited against the church. And we all have reason to dread the fury of one, who is “the roaring lion,” as well as the “Accuser of the brethren.” From him none can deliver us, but God only.

3. *O LORD my God, if I have done this; if there be iniquity in my hands;*

David makes a solemn appeal to God, the searcher of hearts, as judge of his innocence, with regard to the particular crime laid to his charge. Any person, when slandered, may do the same. But Christ only could call upon heaven to attest his universal uprightness.

rightness. In his "hands" there was "no iniquity;" all his works were wrought in perfect righteousness; and when the prince of this world came to try and explore him, he found nothing whereof justly to accuse him. The vessel was thoroughly shaken, but the liquor in it continued pure.

4. *If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me; yea I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy.*

David probably alludes to the life of Saul, which was twice preserved by him, when he had been pressed by his attendants to embrace the opportunity of taking it away. See 1 Sam. xxiv. xxvi. Of the Son of David St Paul says, "in this he commended his love to us, that when we were sinners, he died for us." Rom. v. 8. In so exalted a sense did he deliver him that without cause was his enemy." Wretched they who persecute their benefactor; happy he who can reflect, that he has been a benefactor to his persecutors.

5. *Let the enemy persecute my soul, and take it; yea let him tread down my life upon the earth, and lay mine honour in the dust.*

These are the evils which David imprecates on himself, if he were such as his adversaries represented him; persecution, apprehension, death, and disgrace. Christ, for our sakes submitting to the imputation of guilt, suffered all these; but being innocent in himself, he triumphed over them all; he was raised and released, glorified and adored; he pursued and overtook his enemies, he conquered the conquerors, and trampled them under his feet; and he enableth us, through grace, to do the same.

6. *Arise O LORD in thine anger, lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies: and awake for me to the judgment that thou hast commanded.*

To a protestation of innocence succeeds a prayer for judgment upon the case, which is formed on these two considerations; first, the unreasonable and unrelenting fury of the persecutors; secondly, the justice which God has "commanded" others to execute, and which therefore he himself will doubtless execute upon such occasions. How did he "awake," and "arise," and "lift up himself to judgment," on the behalf of his Anointed, in the day of the resurrection of Jesus, and the subsequent confusion of his enemies? And let injured innocence ever comfort itself with the remembrance of another day to come, when, every earth-born cloud being removed, it shall dazzle its oppressors with a lustre far superior to that of the noon-day sun.

7. *So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about; for their sakes therefore return thou on high.*

The meaning is, that a visible display of God's righteous judgment would induce multitudes, who should behold, or hear of it, to adore and glorify him. For their sakes, therefore as well as that of the sufferer, he is intreated to re-ascend the tribunal, as formerly, and pronounce the wished-for sentence. Thus the determination of the cause between Jesus and his adversaries, by his resurrection, and "return on high," brought "the congregation of the nations" around him, and effected the conversion of the world. Nor, in human affairs, does any thing more advance the reputation of a people among their neighbours, than an equitable sentence in the mouth of him who sitteth in judgment.

8. *The LORD shall judge the people; judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me.*

Conscious of his "righteousness" and "integrity," as to the matter in question, David desires to be judged

judged by him, who is to judge the world at the last day. How few, among Christians, have seriously and deliberately considered, whether the sentence of that day is likely to be in their favour? Yet, how many, with the utmost composure and self complacency, repeat continually the words of this Psalm, as well as those in the *Te Deum*, "We believe that thou shalt come to be our judge!" Legal, or perfect righteousness and integrity are peculiar to the Redeemer: but evangelical righteousness and integrity all must have, who would be saved.

9. *O let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, but establish the just: or, the wickedness of the wicked shall, &c. for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.* 10. *My defence is of God, who saveth the upright in heart.*

It is predicted, that wickedness will, in the end, be abolished, and the just immoveably established, by Him who knoweth intimately the very thoughts and desires of both good and bad men, and will give to each their due reward. How can we doubt of this, when it has pleased God to afford so many examples and preludes to it, in his dispensations of old time? The righteous cause hath already triumphed in Christ; let us not doubt, but that it will do so in the church. Happy the man, whose hope is therefore in God, because "he saveth the upright in heart."

11. *God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day.*

The sense seems to be, that there are daily instances in the world of God's favour towards his people; as also of his displeasure against the ungodly, who are frequently visited by sore judgments, and taken away in their sins. In this light we should

should consider and regard all history, whether that of our own age and nation, or of any other.

12. *If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready.* 13. *He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors.*

The sinner, who is not converted by the vengeance inflicted on others, will himself at length be made an example of. The wrath of God may be slow, but it is always sure. In thoughtless security man wantons and wastes away the precious hours; he knows not that every transgression sets a fresh edge on the sword, which is thus continually whetting for his destruction; nor considers, that he is the mark of an archer who never errs, and who, at this very instant, perhaps, has fitted to the string that arrow, which is to pierce his soul with everlasting anguish.

14. *Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood.*

This is not to be understood as if “travail” were previous to “conception.” The first is a general expression; “Behold, he travaileth with iniquity;” the latter part of the verse is more particular; as if it had been said, “and having conceived mischief, he bringeth forth falsehood.” When an evil thought is instilled into the heart of a man, then the seed of the wicked one is sown; by admitting, retaining, and cherishing the diabolical suggestion in his mind, he “conceiveth” a purpose of “mischief;” when that purpose is gradually formed and matured for the birth, he “travaileth with iniquity;” at length, by carrying it into action, he “bringeth forth falsehood.” The purity of the soul, like that of the body, from whence the image is borrowed, must be preserved by keeping out of the way of temptation.

15. *He*

15. *He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made.* 16. *His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate.*

All the world agrees to acknowledge the equity of that sentence which inflicts upon the guilty the punishment intended by them for the innocent. No one pities the fate of a man buried in that pit which he had dug to receive his neighbour; or of him who owes his death-wound to the return of an arrow shot against heaven. Saul was overthrown by those Philistines, whom he would have made the instruments of cutting off David. Haman was hanged on his own gallows. The Jews, who excited the Romans to crucify Christ, were themselves, by the Romans, crucified in crowds. Striking instances these of the vengeance to be one day executed on all tempters and persecutors of others; when men and angels shall lift up their voices, and cry out together, "Righteous art thou, O LORD, and just are thy judgments."

17. *I will praise the LORD according to his righteousness; and will sing praise to the name of the LORD most high.*

Whatever doubts may at present arise concerning the ways of God, let us rest assured that they will all receive a solution; and that the "righteousness" of the great judge, manifested in his final determinations, will be the subject of everlasting hallelujahs.

P S A L M VIII.

ARGUMENT.

This is the first of those Psalms which the church hath appointed to be read on Ascension-day. It treats, as appears from Heb. ii. 6, &c. of the wonderful love of God, shewn by the exaltation
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of our nature in Messiah, or the second Adam, to the right hand of the Majesty on high, and by the subjection of all creatures to the word of his power.

I. O LORD, *our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens.*

The Prophet beholds in spirit the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow; like St Stephen afterward, he sees heaven opened, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; the sight fills his heart with wonder, love, and devotion, which break forth in this address to "Jehovah," as "our Lord;" for such he is by the twofold right of creation and redemption, having made us, and purchased us. On both accounts, "how excellent," how full of beauty and honour is his name, diffused by the gospel through "all the earth!" But more especially do men and angels admire and adore him for the exaltation of his "glory," the glory of the only begotten, high "above the heavens," and all created nature, to the throne prepared for him before the foundation of the world.

2. *Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained, Heb. founded, or, constituted strength, because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.*

This verse is cited by our Lord, Matt. xxi. 16. and applied to "little children in the temple, crying, "Hosannah to the son of David!" which vexed and confounded his malignant adversaries. The import of the words, therefore, plainly is, that the praises of Messiah, celebrated in the church by his children, have in them a strength and power which nothing can withstand; they can abash infidelity, when at its greatest height, and strike hell itself dumb. In the citation made by our Lord, which

the Evangelist gives from the Greek of the LXX, we read, "thou hast perfected praise," which seems to be rather a paraphrase than a translation of the Hebrew, literally rendered by our translators, "thou hast ordained strength."

3. *When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; 4. What is man that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?*

At the time of inditing this Psalm, David is evidently supposed to have had before his eyes the heavens, as they appear by night. He is struck with the awful magnificence of the wide extended firmament, adorned by the moon walking in brightness, and rendered brilliant by the vivid lustre of a multitude of shining orbs, differing from each other in magnitude and splendor. And when, from surveying the beauty of heaven, with its glorious shew, he turns to take a view of the creature man, he is still more affected by the mercy, than he had before been by the majesty of the Lord: since far less wonderful it is, that God should make such a world as this, than that He, who made such a world as this, should be "mindful of man," in his fallen estate, and should "visit" human nature with his salvation.

5. *For thou hast made him a little, or, for a little while, lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. 6. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet.*

On these two verses, with that preceding, St Paul has left us the following comment. "One in a certain place TESTIFIED, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than [*marg.* a little while inferior to] the angels; thou crownest him with glory and honour, and

and didst set him over the works of thy hands ; thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. BUT NOW we see not YET all things put under him. BUT we see JESUS, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour." Heb. ii. 6, &c. See also 1 Cor. xv. 27.

7. *All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field :*
 8. *The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea.*

Adam, upon his creation, was invested with sovereign dominion over the creatures, in words of the same import with these ; Gen. i. 28. which are therefore here used, and the creatures particularized, to inform us, that what the first Adam lost by transgression, the second Adam regained by obedience. That "glory" which was "set above the heavens," could not but be over all things on earth." And accordingly, we hear our Lord saying, after his resurrection, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." Matt. xxvii. 18. Nor is it a speculation unpleasing, or unprofitable, to consider, that he who rules over the material world, is Lord also of the intellectual, or spiritual creation, represented thereby. The souls of the faithful, lowly and harmless, are the sheep of his pasture ; those who, like oxen, are strong to labour in the church, and who, by expounding the word of life, tread out the corn for the nourishment of the people, own him for their kind and beneficent master ; nay, tempers fierce and untractable as the wild beasts of the desert, are yet subject to his will ; spirits of the angelic kind, that, like the birds of the air, traverse freely the superior regions, move at his

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command ;

command ; and those evil ones, whose habitation is in the deep abyfs, even to the great Leviathan himself ; all, all, are put under the feet of King Messiah ; who “ because he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, was therefore highly exalted, and had a name given him above every name, that at the name of JESUS every knee should bow, whether of things in heaven, or things on earth, or things under the earth ; and that every tongue should confess that JESUS is LORD, to the glory of God the Father.” Phil. ii 8, &c.

9. *O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth !*

Let therefore the universal chorus of men and angels join their voices together, and make their sound to be heard as one, in honour of the Redeemer, evermore praising him, and saying, O Lord, our Jesus Christ, King of Righteousness, Peace, and Glory, King of kings, and Lord of lords, how excellent, how precious, how lovely, how great and glorious is thy Name, diffused over all the earth, for the salvation of thy chosen. Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. And let heaven and earth say, AMEN.

II DAY. MORNING PRAYER. PSALM IX.

ARGUMENT.

This Psalm consists of two parts, a thanksgiving, 1—12, and a prayer, 13—20. Upon what particular occasion it was composed, is not known ; probably, to celebrate the victories gained by David over the neighbouring nations, after God had exalted him, to be king in Sion. See ver. 11. But most certainly the Psalm was intended for the

the use of the Christian Church; and she continually, by using it, 1, 2. declares her resolution to celebrate the praises of her God; since 3, 4. her enemies were vanquished, and her cause was carried; 5, 6. the empire of Satan was subverted, and 7, 8. the kingdom of Christ established; 9, 10. affording to believers refuge and salvation; for all these blessings, 11. Christians are excited to praise their Redeemer, who 12. forgets nothing that is done or suffered for his sake. 13, 14. The Church petitions for final deliverance from the world, and the evil thereof; 15, 16. building her hope upon the mercies already received, 17, 18. she foretells the destruction of the wicked; and 19, 20. prays for the manifestation of God.

1. *I will praise thee, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will shew forth all thy marvellous works.*

In this animated and exalted hymn, the church begins with declaring her resolution to "praise Jehovah," as the author of her salvation; and that, neither coldly, as if the salvation were little worth; nor partially, reserving a share of the glory of it to herself; but with the "whole heart," with an affection pure and flaming, like the holy fire upon the altar. She is determined to "shew forth" to the world, for its conviction and conversion, "all his marvellous works," the most "marvellous" of which are those wrought for, and in the souls of men. Outward miracles strike more forcibly upon the senses; but they are introductory only to those internal operations, which they are intended to represent.

2. *I will be glad and rejoice in thee; I will sing praise to thy name, O most High.*

Christians are taught to "be glad and rejoice," not in abundance of wealth, or plenitude of power, not in the pleasures of sense, or the praise of men, but in God their Saviour; and their joy is as far superior to the joy of the worldly, as the object of the one is to that of the other. He who, with the spirit and the understanding, as well as with the voice, "sings praise to thy name O most High," is employed as the angels are, and experiences a foretaste of the delight they feel.

3. *When mine enemies are driven back, they shall fall, or, they stumble, or fall, and perish at thy presence.*

The church begins to explain the subject of her joy, which is a victory over her "enemies;" a victory, not gained by herself, but by the "presence of "God" in the midst of her. The grand enemy of our salvation was first vanquished by Christ in the wilderness, and "driven back," with the words, "Get thee behind me, Satan." The same blessed person afterward compleatly triumphed over him upon the Cross, when the "prince of this world was cast out." This is that great victory, which we celebrate in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, from generation to generation; and, through faith in him who atchieved it, we likewise are enabled to fight, and to overcome.

4. *For thou hast maintained my right and my cause; thou satest in the throne judging right.*

The same important transaction is here described in forensic, as before it was in military terms. Satan having gotten possession of mankind, might have pleaded his right to keep it, since by transgression they had left God, and sold themselves to him. But Christ, as the church's representative and advocate, made the satisfaction required, paid down the price of redemption, "took the prey from the
mighty

mighty, and delivered the lawful captive," Isai. xlix. 24. Thus was our "right and our cause maintained;" thus were we rescued from the oppressor, and he who sat on the throne judged righteous judgment." Something of this sort may be supposed to pass, concerning each individual, between the Accuser of the brethren and the eternal Intercessor, in the court of heaven.

5. *Thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the wicked, thou hast put out their name for ever and ever.*

To the victory of Christ succeeded the overthrow of Satan's empire in the pagan world. "The heathen was rebuked," when, through the power of the Spirit in those who preached the Gospel, men were convinced of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment; "the wicked were destroyed, and their name put out for ever," when the Roman power became Christian, and the ancient idolatry sunk, to rise no more. A day is coming, when all iniquity shall perish, and be forgotten, in like manner.

6. *O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end; or, the destructions of the enemy are compleated to the utmost; and thou, O God, hast destroyed their cities, their memorial is perished with them! **

The Christian church, when repeating these words, may be supposed to take a retrospect view of the successive fall of those empires, with their capital "cities," in which the "enemy" had from time to time fixed his residence, and which had vexed and persecuted the people of God in different ages. Such were the Assyrian, or Babylonian, the Persian, and the Grecian monarchies. All these vanished away and

* Bishop Lowth renders this verse to the same effect. "Desolations have consumed the enemy for ever; and as to the cities which thou, O God, hast destroyed, their memory is perished with them." See Merrick's Annotations on the Psalms. p. 9.

and came to nothing. Nay, the very “ memorial” of the stupendous Nineveh and Babylon is so “ perished with them,” that the place where they once stood is now no more to be found. The Roman empire was the last of the pagan persecuting powers; and when the church saw “ that” under her feet, well might she cry out, “ The destructions of the enemy are compleated to the utmost !” How lovely will this song be, in the day when the last enemy shall be destroyed, and the world itself shall become what Babylon is at present. Next to the glory and triumph of that day, is the jubilee which the Christian celebrates, upon his conquest over the body of sin.

7. *But the LORD shall endure for ever ; he hath prepared his throne for judgment.* 8. *And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness.*

In opposition to the transient nature of earthly kingdoms, the eternal duration of Messiah’s kingdom is asserted; as also its universality, extending over the whole “ world;” together with the consummate rectitude of its administration. To him, as supreme judge in an unerring court of equity, lies an appeal from the unjust determinations here below; and by him in person shall every cause be reheard, when that court shall sit, and all nations shall be summoned to appear before it.

9. *The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in time of trouble.*

In the mean time, and until he returneth to judgment, the poor in spirit, the meek and lowly penitent, however “ oppressed in times of trouble,” by worldly and ungodly men, and by the frequent assaults of the wicked one, still findeth a refuge in Jesus; who renews his strength by fresh supplies of
grace,

grace, arms him with faith and patience, and animates him with the hope of glory.

10. *And they that know thy name, will put their trust in thee; for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.*

Therefore, they who “know God’s name,” that is, who are acquainted with, and have experienced his merciful nature and disposition, expressed in that name, will take no unlawful methods to escape affliction, nor “put their trust” in any but “him,” for deliverance; since a most undoubted truth (and O what a comfortable truth) it is, that “thou, Lord Jesus, hast not forsaken,” nor ever wilt finally “forsake them that” sincerely and diligently, with their whole heart, “seek” to “thee” for help; as a child, upon apprehension of danger, flies to the arms of its tender and indulgent parent.

11. *Sing praises to the LORD which dwelleth in Zion; declare among the people his doings.*

The church, having celebrated the power and the goodness of her Lord, exhorteth all her children to lift up their voices, and sing together, in full chorus, the praises of him whose tabernacle is in “Zion,” who resides with men, upon the mountain of his holiness, and saith, “Behold I am with you always, even to the end of the world.” And thus, not only “among the people,” but also to principalities and powers in heavenly places, will be “declared” and made known, by the voice of thanksgiving in the church, the manifold wisdom and mercy of God, in his “doings” towards man. See Ephes iii. 10.

12. *When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them, and forgetteth not the cry of the humble.*

An objection might be started to the so much extolled loving kindness of God, namely, that in this world

world his faithful people are often afflicted and persecuted; nay, sometimes suffered to be killed all the day long, as sheep appointed to the slaughter. But this is obviated by the consideration, that all is not over, as wicked men may suppose, at death; that a strict "inquisition" will be appointed hereafter, when the "blood" of martyrs and the sufferings of confessors shall not be "forgotten." He remembereth "THEM, that is, those who seek him," mentioned verse 10; so that the exhortation to "sing praises," &c. ver. 11. seems parenthetical.

13. *Have mercy upon me, O LORD, consider the trouble which I suffer of them that hate me, thou that liftest me up from the gates of death.*

We are now come to the second part of the Psalm. The church, after having, in the former part, strengthened her faith by commemoration of the mighty works God had wrought for her, proceeds, in this, to pour forth a prayer for farther and final deliverance. She speaks, as still militant upon earth, still in an enemy's country, surrounded by them that hate her, and suffering much from them. To whom therefore should she address herself, but to him, whose high prerogative it is, literally to "raise from the gates of death;" to him who is, in every possible sense, "the resurrection and the life?"

14. *That I may shew forth all thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion. I will rejoice in thy salvation.*

The members of the church militant despair of being able to "shew forth all God's praise," till they become members of the church triumphant. There is a beautiful contrast between "the gates of death," in the preceding verse, and "the gates of the daughter of Zion," or the heavenly Jerusalem, in this. The one leads down to the pit, the other up

up to the mount of God ; the one opens into perpetual darkness, the other into light eternal ; from the one proceeds nothing but what is evil, from the other nothing but what is good ; infernal spirits watch at the one, the other are unbarred by the hands of angels. What a blessing then is it, to be snatched from the former, and transported to the latter ! Who but must “ rejoice ” in such “ salvation ! ”

15. The heathen are sunk, or sink down in the pit that they made ; in the net which they hid is their own foot taken. 16. The LORD is known by the judgment which he executeth ; the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands.

Faith beholds, as already executed, that righteous judgment, whereby wicked men and evil spirits will fall into the perdition which they had prepared for others, either openly by persecution, or more covertly by temptation. See Ps. vii. 15, 16.

17. The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.

All wickedness came originally, with the wicked one, from hell ; thither it will be again remitted, and they who hold on its side must accompany it on its return to that place of torment, there to be shut up for ever. The true state both of “ nations,” and the individuals of which they are composed, is to be estimated from one single circumstance, namely, whether in their doings they remember, or “ forget God.” Remembrance of Him is the well-spring of virtue ; forgetfulness of Him, the fountain of vice.

18. For the needy shall not always be forgotten : the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever.

They who remember God, shall infallibly be remembered by Him ; and let this be their anchor, in the most tempestuous seasons. The body of a
martyr

martyr is buried in the earth; and so is the root of the fairest flower. But neither of them “perisheth for ever.” Let but the winter pass, and the spring return, and lo, the faded and withered flower blooms; the body sown in corruption, dishonour, and weakness, rises in incorruption, glory, and power.

19. *Arise, O LORD, let not man prevail: let the heathen be judged in thy sight.*

And now, the Spirit and the Bride say, Come; Arise, O Lord Jesus, from thy throne of glory, and come quickly; “let not” the “man” of sin “prevail” against thy church; but let the long depending cause between her and her adversaries, “be judged” and finally determined “in thy sight.”

20. *Put them in fear, O LORD, that the nations may know themselves to be but men.*

Strange, that man, dust in his original, sinful by his fall, and continually reminded of both, by every thing in him and about him, should yet stand in need of some sharp affliction, some severe visitation from God, to bring him to the knowledge of himself, and make him feel, who, and what he is. But this is frequently the case; and when it is, as there are wounds which cannot be healed without a previous application of caustics, mercy is necessitated to begin her work with an infliction of judgment.

PSALM X.

ARGUMENT.

This Psalm is, in the LXX, joined to the preceding, but, in the Hebrew, divided from it. The church, under persecution from the spirit of antichrist in the world, after 1. an humble expostulation with her Lord, setteth down the marks whereby that spirit may be known; such as 2. hatred of
the

the faithful ; 3. self willedness and worldly mindedness ; 4. infidelity ; 5, 6. profligacy and pride ; 7. profaneness and perjury ; 8—10. subtlety and treachery employed against the people of God ; 11. security and presumption. From the persecutions of such a spirit the church 12—15. prayeth earnestly to be delivered ; and 16—18. through faith, rejoiceth in tribulation.

1. *Why standest thou afar off, O LORD ! Why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble ?*

During the conflict between the church and her adversaries, God is represented as one withdrawing to a distance, instead of affording succour : nay, as one concealing himself, so as not to be found by those who petitioned for aid, or counsel. To behold the righteous cause oppressed, and good men seemingly deserted by heaven, at a time when they most need its assistance, is apt to offend the weak, and oftentimes stagger those who are strong. It is indeed a sore trial, but intended to make us perfect in the practice of three most important duties, humility, resignation, and faith. That we may not faint under the severity of this discipline, let us ever bear in mind, that the beloved Son of the Father, the Son in whom he was well pleased, had once occasion to utter these words, “ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? ”

2. *The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor ; let them, or, they shall be taken in the devices that they have imagined.*

Inconceivable is that malignant fury, with which a conceited infidel persecutes an humble believer, though that believer hath no otherwise offended him, than by being such. And what wonder ? Since it is a copy of the hatred which Satan bears to Christ. But the devices of the adversaries, like

those of their leader, will end in their own eternal confusion.

3. *For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and bleffeth the covetous whom the LORD abhorreth.*

The first part of this verse points out that alarming symptom of a reprobate mind, a disposition to exult and glory in those lusts, which are the shame and disgrace of human nature, whether the world or the flesh be their object. The latter clause is differently rendered, as implying either that "the wicked bleffeth the covetous, whom God abhorreth," or that "the wicked, being covetous, or oppressive, bleffeth himself, and abhorreth God." Either way, an oppressing, griping, worldly spirit is characterized, with its direct opposition to the spirit of God, which teaches, that sin is to be confessed with shame and sorrow; that in God alone man is to make his boast; and that it is more blessed to give, than to receive.

4. *The wicked through the pride of his countenance will not seek after God; God is not in all his thoughts; or, all his imaginations are, there is no God.*

The counsels of heaven are not known by the wicked, because they are not sought after; and they are not sought after, because of a diabolical self-sufficiency, which, having taken possession of the heart, displays itself in the countenance, and reigns throughout the man. He wants no Prophet to teach him, no Priest to atone for him, no King to conduct him; he needs neither a Christ to redeem, nor a spirit to sanctify him; he believes no Providence, adores no Creator, and fears no Judge. Thus he lives a "stranger from the covenants of promise, and without God in the world." Eph. ii. 12. O that this character now existed only in the Psalmist's description!

5. *His*

5. *His ways are always grievous, or, corrupt; thy judgments are far above out of his sight; as for all his enemies, he puffeth at them.*

As are a man's principles, such will be his practices; and if he hath not God in his thoughts, his course of life will be corrupt and abominable, his end, his means and his motives being all wrong, and polluted with concupiscence. There would have been some chance of holding him by fear, but that is gone with his faith; for no man can tremble at judgments, in which he does not believe.

6. *He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved, for I shall never be in adversity.*

Prosperity begets presumption, and he who has been long accustomed to see his designs succeed, begins to think it impossible they should ever do otherwise. The long suffering of God, instead of leading such an one to repentance, only hardens him in his iniquity. Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, he thinks it will not be executed at all. He vaunteth himself therefore, like the proud Chaldean monarch, in the Babylon which he hath erected, and fondly pronounceth it to be immortal? Such, it is too evident, are often the vain imaginations of triumphant wickedness.

7. *His mouth is full of cursing, deceit, and fraud; under his tongue is mischief and vanity.*

From the thoughts of the sinner's "heart," mentioned in the preceding verse, David goes on to describe the words of his "mouth." And here we may illustrate the character of antichrist, by setting that of Christ in opposition to it. The mouth of one poureth forth a torrent of curses and lies; from that of the other flowed a clear and copious stream of benediction and truth. Under the serpentine tongue of the former is a bag of mischief and vani-

ty; but honey and milk were under the tongue of the latter, so pleasing and so nourishing to the spirits of men were all his communications.

8. *He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages: in the secret places doth he murder the innocent: his eyes are privily set against the poor.*

From "words," the description proceeds to "actions." And with regard to these, as the Son of God went publicly preaching through cities and villages to save men's lives, so this child of Satan lieth in ambush to destroy them, privily bringing into the church, and diffusing among the people, pestilent errors, and damnable heresies, for that purpose.

9. *He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den; he lieth in wait to catch the poor: he doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net.*

The disciples of Jesus, like their blessed Master, are ever vigilant to catch men in the evangelical net, in order to draw them from the world to God: the partizans of Satan, in imitation of their leader, are employed in watching, from their lurking places, the footsteps of the Christian pilgrim, that they may spring upon him in an unguarded moment, and draw him from God to the world, and from thence to the devil.

10. *He croucheth and humbleth himself, that the poor may fall by his strong ones.*

Our Lord, who is stiled "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," became a "Lamb," for the salvation of mankind; but when his adversary at any time "humbleth" himself, when the wolf appears in sheep's cloathing, let the flock beware; it is for their more effectual destruction. And if, allured by an outward shew of moderation and benevolence, the simple ones shall venture themselves within his reach, they

they will soon find that his nature is disguised, but not altered.

11. *He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten; he hideth his face, he will never see it.*

For the chastisement of his people, God often suffers the enemy to prevail and prosper, who then ridicules the faith and hope of the church, and solaces himself in the conceit, that if there be a God, he either knows not, or cares not, what is done upon earth. These Epicurean notions, however absurd and unworthy of the Deity they may seem, do yet in some measure take possession of every man's mind at the instant of his committing a sin; since it is most certain, that, with a due impression of the divine omniscience upon his soul at the time, he would not commit it, for all that the tempter could offer him. But faith is apt to sleep, and then sin awakes.

12. *Arise, O LORD, O God lift up thine hand: forget not the humble.* 13. *Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? He hath said in his heart, thou wilt not require it.*

The church now prays, that Jehovah, in vindication of his own honour and attributes, would arise to judgment, and make bare his glorious arm for the defence of his elect, who cry day and night unto him. Thus would the insolence of the wicked one and his agents, founded on the divine forbearance, be repressed, and all the world would see, that God had not forgotten, but still, as ever, remembered and regarded the low estate of his handmaid.

14. *Thou hast seen it, for thou beholdest mischief and spite to requite it with thine hand: the poor committeth himself unto thee, thou art the helper of the fatherless.*

“The wicked,” above, “faith in his heart, thou wilt not require it.” But the faithful are taught other things by the promises in Scripture, and the

experience of unnumbered histories. They know assuredly, that God beholds all that travail and vexation which some inflict, and others sustain, upon the earth; and that he will infallibly recompence to the former their deeds, to the latter their sufferings. Destitute should we be of every earthly help, in the state of beggars and orphans, yet in him will we trust, who, as the father and protector of all such, saith unto every one of us, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

15. *Break thou the arm of the wicked and the evil man: seek out his wickedness till thou find none.*

This may be either a prayer, or a prediction, implying that the time will come, when the power of Jehovah will dash in pieces that of the enemy, by the demolition either of sin or the sinner, until wickedness be come utterly to an end, and righteousness be established for ever, in the kingdom of Messiah. And lo,

16. *The LORD is King for ever and ever: the heathen are perished out of the land.*

Faith beholds the Lord Jesus, as already manifested in his glorious majesty, the kingdoms of this world become his, and the Canaanite no more in the land of promise. Each individual experiences in himself a happy prelude to this manifestation, when Christ rules in his heart by the Spirit, and every appetite and affection is obedient to the sceptre of his kingdom.

17. *LORD, thou hast heard, or, hearest the desire of the humble; thou wilt prepare, or, thou preparest their heart; thou wilt cause, or, thou causest thine ear to hear.*

How many important and comforting truths have we here, in a few words? As, that the "humble" and lowly, whatever they may suffer in the world, are the favourites of Jehovah: that he attends to the
very

very “desires” of their hearts: that such hearts “prepared” to prayer, are so many instruments strung and tuned by the hand of heaven: and that their prayer is as music, to which the Almighty himself listens with pleasure.

18. *To judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress.*

For the sake of the elect, and their prayers, the days of persecution and tribulation will be shortened; the insolence of the earth-born oppressor, the man of sin, will be chastised; the cause of the church will be heard at the tribunal of God, and victory, triumph, and glory will be given unto her. In the foregoing exposition, regard has been chiefly had to the case of the church, and to her sufferings from the spirit of antichrist, in whomsoever existing and acting, from time to time, in the world; this being judged the most generally useful application, which Christians, as such, can make of the Psalm. Particular accommodations of it to the various oppressions of innocent poverty by iniquitous opulence, will meet the eye, and offer themselves at once to persons so circumstanced, for their support and comfort, under their respective afflictions; which will be also not a little alleviated by the consideration, that the whole church of God groaneth with them, and travaileth in pain, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body. Then, and not till then, tears shall cease to run down the cheeks of misery; and sorrow and sighing shall fly away, to return no more for ever.

PSALM XI.

ARGUMENT.

The Psalmist, under persecution, 1—3. declareth himself resolved to trust in God alone, at a time when

when he was advised to fly to some place of refuge; 4. he expresses his faith in the omniscience and overruling power of Jehovah; 5. assigns the reason why good men are afflicted; who, after that the wicked 6. shall be destroyed, will appear to have been, all along, 7. the favoured of God.

1. *In the LORD put I my trust; how say ye to my soul, flee as a bird to your mountain?*

The Christian, like David, in perilous times, should make God his fortress, and continue doing his duty in his station; he should, at the instigation of those about him, like a poor, silly, timorous, inconstant bird, either fly for refuge to the devices of worldly wisdom, or desert his post, and retire into solitude, while he can serve the cause in which he is engaged. Nor indeed is there any "mountain" on earth out of the reach of care or trouble. Temptations are every where; and so is the grace of God.

2. *For lo the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart.*

These seem to be still the words of David's friends, representing to him, as a motive for his flight, the extreme danger he was in from the "arrows" of the enemy, already, as it were, fitted to the "string," and pointed at him "in secret," so that not knowing from whence they were to come, he could not guard against them. The Christian's danger, from the darts of the infernal archers, lying in wait for his soul, is full as great as that of David. But "the shield of FAITH" sufficeth, in both cases.

3. *If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do!*

This

This likewise seems to be spoken by the same persons, discouraging David from making any farther resistance, by the consideration, that all was over; the “foundations” of religion and law were subverted; and what could a man, engaged in the most “righteous” designs, hope to “do,” when that was the case? Such arguments are often urged by the timid, in similar circumstances; but they are fallacious; since all is not over, while there is a man left to reprove error, and bear testimony to the truth. And a man who does it with becoming spirit, may stop a prince, or senate, while in full career, and recover the day. But let us hear David’s farther reply to his advisers.

4. *The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD’s throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eye-lids try the children of men.*

In the first verse, the Psalmist had declared his trust to be in Jehovah. After reciting the reasonings of his friends, he now proceeds to evince the fitness and propriety of such trust, notwithstanding the seemingly desperate situation of affairs. “Jehovah is in his holy temple;” into which, therefore, unholy men, however triumphant in this world, can never enter: “Jehovah’s throne is in heaven;” and consequently superior to all power upon earth, which may be controlled and over-ruled by him in a moment; “his eyes behold, his eyelids try the children of men:” so that no secret wickedness can escape his knowledge, who scrutinizeth the hearts as well as the lives of all the sons of Adam. Why, then, should the man despair, who hath on his side holiness, omnipotence, and omniscience?

5. *The LORD trieth the righteous; but the wicked, and him that loveth violence, his soul hateth.*

As

As to the afflictions which persons may suffer, who are embarked in a righteous cause, they are intended to purge away the dross, and to refine them for the Master's use. "Gold," saith the son of Sirach, "is tried in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of adversity" Ecclus. ii. 5. In the mean time, God's displeasure against the wicked is ever the same, and their prosperity, instead of benefiting, will in the end destroy them. The cases of David and Saul, Christ and the Jews, the martyrs and their persecutors, are all cases in point, and should be often in our thoughts, to teach us patience, and guard us against despair, in seasons of calamity, pain, or disgrace.

6. *Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, or, burning coals, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup.*

St Jude, ver. 7. tells us, that the cities of Sodom, Gomorrah, &c. for their abominable sins, "πρὸς κενταὶ δειγμα, are set forth for an example, or, specimen, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." And here we see the images are plainly taken from the dreadful judgment inflicted on those cities, and transferred to the vengeance of the last day. Then the sons of faithful Abraham shall behold a prospect, like that which once presented itself to the eyes of their father; when rising early in the morning, and looking towards Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, he "beheld, and lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace!" Gen. xix. 28. Such must be the "portion of their cup," who have dashed from them the cup of salvation. He, therefore, who would enjoy the prosperity of the wicked here, must take with it their torment hereafter; as he
who

who is ambitious of wearing the crown of righteousness in heaven, must be content to endure tribulation upon earth.

7. *For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.*

He who is in himself essential righteousness, cannot but love his own resemblance, wrought in the faithful by his good Spirit; with a countenance full of paternal affection, he beholds, and speaks peace and comfort to them, in the midst of their sorrows; until, admitted, through mercy, to the glory, from which justice excludes the wicked, and beholding that countenance which has always beheld them, they shall enter upon a life of boundless and everlasting felicity.

II DAY. EVENING PRAYER. PSALM XII.

ARGUMENT.

The church, through David, 1, 2. laments the decrease of God's faithful servants, and the universal corruption among men, but 3—5. rests upon the divine promises, the truth and certainty of which 6, 7. she celebrates, and comforts herself therewith, while in a world, where oftentimes 8. the wicked walk uncontrolled.

1. *Help, Heb. save, LORD, for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.*

Our Lord foretells, that in the latter days, "because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold;" and seems to question whether, "when the Son of man cometh, he shall find faith upon the earth." The universal depravity of Jew and Gentile caused the church, of old, to pray earnestly for the first advent of Christ; and a like depravity among those who call themselves Christians, may induce her to pray no less earnestly for his appearance

ance the second time unto salvation. It is frequently a benefit, to be destitute of help from man, both as it puts us upon seeking it from God, and inclines him to grant it, when we do seek.

2. *They speak vanity, or, a lie, every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips, and with a double heart do they speak.*

When men cease to be faithful to their God, he who expects to find them so to each other, will be much disappointed. The primitive sincerity will accompany the primitive piety in her flight from the earth; and then interest will succeed conscience in the regulation of human conduct, till one man cannot trust another farther than he holds him by that tie. Hence, by the way, it is, that although many are infidels themselves, yet few chuse to have their families and dependants such; as judging, and rightly judging, that true Christians are the only persons to be depended on, for the exact discharge of social duties.

3. *The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things: 4. Who have said, with our tongue will we prevail, our lips are our own: who is Lord over us?*

They who take pleasure in deceiving others, will at the last find themselves most of all deceived, when the son of truth, by the brightness of his rising, shall at once detect and consume hypocrisy. And as to men of another stamp, who speak great swelling words of vanity; who vaunt themselves in the arm of flesh, thinking to prevail by human wit, or human power; equally deplorable will be their case, when the Lord God “omnipotent” reigneth.

5. *For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the LORD, I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him.*

For

For the consolation of the afflicted and poor in spirit, Jehovah is here introduced promising, out of compassion to their sufferings, to “arise, and set them in safety,” or place them in a state of “salvation.” Such all along has been his promise to the church, who by looking back to the deliverances wrought of old for the servants of God, and above all, to that wrought for the Son of God, is now encouraged to look forward, and expect her final redemption from the scorn and insolence of infidelity.

6. *The words of the LORD are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace, or, crucible of earth, purified seven times.*

The church rejoices in the promises of God her Saviour, because they are such as she can confide in. His words are not like those of deceitful boasting man, but true and righteous altogether. Often have they been put to the test, in the trials of the faithful, like silver committed to the furnace, in an earthen crucible; but like silver in its most refined and exalted purity, found to contain no dross of imperfection, no alloy of fallibility in them. The words of Jehovah are holy in his precepts, just in his laws, gracious in his promises, significant in his institutions, true in his narrations, and infallible in his predictions. What are the thousands of gold and silver, compared to the treasures of the sacred page!

7. *Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.*

As if it had been said, Yes, blessed Lord, what thou hast promised shall surely be performed, since there is with thee no variableness, nor shadow of turning: thou wilt keep thy poor and lowly servants, as thou hast promised, from being circumvented by treachery, or crushed by power; thou wilt preserve them undefiled amidst an evil and a-

dulterous generation; thou wilt be with thy church to the end of the world, and then admit her to be with thee for ever.

8. *The wicked shall walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted.*

While the faithful repose, as they ought to do, an unlimited confidence in God's promises, they have, in the mean time, but too much reason to mourn the prevalence of wickedness, stalking, like its author, to and fro, and up and down in the earth, uncontrouled by those who bear the sword, but who either blunt its edge, or turn it the wrong way. Such is often the state of things here below; and a reflection, made upon the subject by our Lord, when his enemies drew near to apprehend him, may satisfy us how it comes to be so; "It is your hour, and the power of darkness." But that hour will quickly pass with us, as it did with him, and the power of darkness will be overthrown; the Lord will be our everlasting light, and the days of our mourning shall be ended.

P S A L M XIII.

ARGUMENT.

This Psalm contains, 1, 2. a complaint of desertion; 3, 4. a prayer for the divine assistance; 5, 6. an act of faith and thanksgiving.

1. *How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD, for ever? How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?*

While God permits his servants to continue under affliction, he is said, after the manner of men, to have "forgotten, and hid his face from them." For the use, therefore, of persons in such circumstances, is this Psalm intended; and consequently, it suits the different cases of the church universal, languishing for the advent of her Lord, to deliver her from

from this evil world; of any particular church, in time of persecution; and of each individual, when harraſſed by temptations, or broken by ſickneſs, pain, and ſorrow. He who bore our ſins, and carried our ſorrows, may likewise be preſumed to have made it a part of his devotions, in the day of trouble.

2. *How long ſhall I take counſel in my ſoul, having ſorrow in my heart daily? How long ſhall mine enemy be exalted over me?*

To excite compaſſion, and prevail for help from above, the petitioner mentions three aggravating circumſtances of his miſery: the perplexity of his ſoul, not knowing which way to turn, or what courſe to take; his heart-felt ſorrow, uttering itſelf in ſighs and groanings; and the mortifying reflection, that his enemies were exulting in their conqueſt over him. All this will happen, and be particularly painful, to him who has yielded to temptation, and committed ſin.

3. *Conſider and hear me, O LORD my God; lighten mine eyes, leſt I ſleep the ſleep of death.*

On the preceding conſiderations is founded a prayer to Jehovah, that he would no longer hide his face, but “conſider,” or, more literally, “have reſpect to, favourably behold” his ſervant; that he would “hear, attend to, be mindful of” his ſupplication in diſtreſs. The deliverance requeſted is expreſſed figuratively, “Lighten mine eyes, leſt I ſleep the ſleep of death.” In time of ſickneſs and grief, the “eyes” are dull and heavy; and they grow more and more ſo, as death approaches, which cloſes them in darkneſs. On the other hand, health and joy render the organs of viſion bright and ſparkling, ſeeming, as it were, to impart “light,” to them from within. The words, therefore, may be fitly applied to a recovery of the body natural, and

thence, of the body politic, from their respective maladies. Nor do they less significantly describe the restoration of the soul to a state of spiritual health and holy joy, which will manifest themselves, in like manner, by “the eyes of the understanding being enlightened;” and in this case, the soul is saved from the sleep of sin, as the body is, in the other, from the sleep of death.

4. *Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him; and those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved.*

This argument we often find urged in prayer to God, that he would be pleased to work salvation for his people, lest his and their enemies should seem to triumph over him, as well as them; which would indeed have been the case, had Satan either seduced the true David to sin, or confined him in the grave. And certainly, it should be a powerful motive to restrain us from transgression, when we consider, that as the conversion of a sinner brings glory to God, and causes joy among the angels of heaven; so the fall of a believer disgraces the Gospel of Jesus, opens the mouths of the adversaries, and would produce joy, if such a thing could be, in hell itself.

5. *But I have trusted, or, I trust in thy mercy, my heart shall rejoice, or, rejoices in thy salvation.* 6. *I will sing unto the LORD, because he hath dealt, or, deals bountifully with me.*

The heart, which “trusteth in God’s mercy,” shall alone “rejoice in his salvation,” and celebrate by the tongue, in songs of praise, the loving kindness of the Lord. It is observable, that this, and many other Psalms, with a mournful beginning, have a triumphant ending; to shew us the prevailing power of devotion, and to convince us of the certain return of prayer, sooner or later, bringing
with

with it the comforts of heaven, to revive and enrich our weary and barren spirits, in the gloomy seasons of sorrow and temptation, like the dew descending by night upon the withered summit of an eastern mountain.

P S A L M XIV.

ARGUMENT.

This Psalm is in a manner the same with the LIII.

It sets forth 1—3, the corruption of the world; 4—6, its enmity against the people of God; 7, the prophet longs and prays for salvation.

1. *The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God: they are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doth good.*

It does not appear upon what occasion David composed this Psalm. The revolt of Israel in Absalom's rebellion is by most writers pitched upon as the subject of it. But be this as it may; the expressions are general, and evidently designed to extend beyond a private interpretation. And accordingly, the Apostle, Rom. iii. 10, &c. produces some passages from it, to evince the apostacy of both Jews and Gentiles from their King and their God, and to prove them to be all under sin. In this light therefore we are to consider it, as characterising the principles and practices of those who oppose the Gospel of Christ in all ages. "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." Infidelity is the beginning of sin, folly the foundation of infidelity, and the heart the seat of both. "Their foolish heart (says St Paul of the heathen, Rom. i. 21.) was darkened." The sad consequence of defection in principle, is corruption in practice. "They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is

none that doth good." On these words the reader may see a full comment, Rom. i. 28—32.

2. *The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God.* 3. *They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy, or, putrified: there is none that doth good, no not one.*

Like a watchman on the top of some lofty tower, God is represented as surveying, from his heavenly throne, the sons of Adam, and their proceedings upon the earth: he scrutinizes them, and as it were searches diligently, to find among them a man of true wisdom, one whose heart was turned toward the Lord his God, one who was enquiring the way to salvation and glory, that he might walk therein. But, as the result of this extensive and accurate survey, God informs his prophet, and commissions him to inform the world, that all had declined from the paths of wisdom and righteousness; that the mass of human nature was become putrid, requiring to be cleansed, and the vessels made of it to be formed anew. Such is the Scripture account of man, not having received grace, or having fallen from it; of man without Christ, or in arms against him. See Rom. iii. 11, 12.

*4. *Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? Who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD.*

The "workers of iniquity" work for the wages of death; they fight against God and their own souls; they barter eternity for time, and part with happiness

* Between the preceding verse and this are three others inserted in our common translation, which though taken by St Paul from other parts of Scripture, yet because (Rom. iii. 13.) they followed the words cited from this Psalm, were probably added thereto in this place by some transcribers of the copies of the LXX. For in other copies of the LXX. they exist not, any more than in the Hebrew, Chaldee, or Syriac.

happiness for misery, both in possession and rever-
sion. Well therefore may it be asked, "Have they
no knowledge!" For common sense, after all, is
what they want. They who, with an appetite keen
as that to their food, prey upon the poor, and de-
vour the people of God, will themselves be preyed
upon and devoured by that roaring lion, whose a-
gents for the present they are; and such as now
"call not on" the name of "the Lord" Jesus for
pardon and salvation, shall hereafter call in vain
upon the rocks and mountains, to shelter them
from his power and vengeance.

5 *There were they in great fear; for God is in the ge-
neration of the righteous.*

In the parallel place, Ps. liii. 5. after the words,
"There were they in great fear," are added these,
"where no fear was," which certainly connect bet-
ter with what follows, "For God is in the genera-
tion of the righteous." David is supposed to be
speaking primarily of Israel's defection from him to
Absalom, and here to be assigning the motive of
that defection in many, namely, fear of the rebels'
growing power, and distrust of his ability to pro-
tect them; which fear, he observes, was ground-
less, because his cause was the cause of God, who
would not fail to appear in its support and vindica-
tion. The subjects of Christ, in times of persecu-
tion, are often tempted to renounce their allegiance,
upon the same principle of fear; although of them
it may more emphatically be said, that they "fear
where no fear is, since God is in the generation of
the righteous," and they who are engaged on the
side of Messiah, will, in the end, most assuredly be
triumphant. The latter clause of this verse, in Ps.
liii. runs thus, "For God hath scattered, or, shall
scatter the bones of him that encampeth against
thee;

thee; thou hast, or, shalt put them to shame, because God hath despised them:" the sense of which is evidently the same with—"God is in the generation of the righteous:" he will defend them, and overthrow their enemies: therefore let them not fear, neither let their hearts be troubled. If this interpretation be disapproved, the words, "There were they in great fear," must be understood of the "enemy," and the clause, "where no fear was," must be rendered interrogatively thus "and was there not cause, for them to fear? since God is in the generation of the righteous, or, will scatter the bones of him that encampeth against thee, &c."

6. *Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor; because the LORD is his refuge.*

This is plainly addressed to the adversaries, and charges them with reproaching and scoffing at that confidence in the Lord, expressed by the afflicted righteous, in the preceding verse.

7. *O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! When the LORD bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.*

The consideration of the apostacy and corruption of mankind, described in this Psalm, makes the prophet express a longing desire for the salvation of Israel, which was to go forth out of Zion, and to bring back the people of God from that most dreadful of all captivities, the captivity under sin and death; a salvation, at which Jacob would indeed rejoice, and Israel be glad. And how doth the whole church, at this time, languish for the consummation of her felicity, looking, even until her eyes fail, for that glorious day of final redemption when every believing heart shall exult, and all the sons of God shout aloud for joy!

III DAY.

III DAY. MORNING PRAYER. PSALM XV.

ARGUMENT.

This is one of the Psalms appointed to be used on Ascension day. The Prophet 1. enquires concerning the person, who should ascend into the hill, and dwell in the temple of Jehovah; 2—5. he receives, in answer to his question, a character of such person.

1. LORD, *who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?*

The prophet alludes to the hill of Sion in the earthly Jerusalem, to the tabernacle of God which was thereon, and the character of the priest, who should officiate in that tabernacle. But all these were figures of a celestial Jerusalem, a spiritual Sion, a true tabernacle, and an eternal priest. To the great originals therefore we must transfer our ideas, and consider the enquiry as made after Him, who should fix his resting place on the heavenly mount, and exercise his unchangeable priesthood in the temple not made with hands. And since the disciples of this new and great High Priest become righteous in him, and are by the Spirit conformed to his image, the character which essentially and inherently belongs only to him, will derivatively belong to them also, who must follow his steps below, if they would reign with him above.

2. *He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.*

The man, therefore, who would be a citizen of Zion, and there enter into the rest and joy of his Lord, must set that Lord always before him. Renewed through grace, endued with a lively faith, and an operative charity, he must consider and imitate the life of that blessed person, who walked amongst

mongst men, without partaking of their corruptions; who conversed unblameably with finners; who could give this challenge to his inveterate enemies, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" In whom the grand accuser, when he came, "found nothing;" who, being himself "the Truth," thought and spake nothing else; making many promises, and performing them all;

3. He that *backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.*

Who, knowing the sins, follies, and infirmities of all mankind, made his tongue an instrument, not of disclosing and exasperating, but of covering and healing these sores in human nature; who, esteeming every son of Adam as his neighbour, went about doing good; and then laid down his life, and resigned his breath in prayer for his murderers; who, instead of taking up a reproach, and listening to the calumniator, cast him out, and silenced him, by erasing the handwriting that was against us, and nailing the cancelled indictment to the cross;

4. *In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD; he that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.*

Who rejecteth the wicked, however rich and honourable; and chose the well inclined, however poor and contemptible in the world; who, having, by covenant with the Father, engaged to keep the law, and to taste death for every man, went willingly and steadily through this work, and surmounted every obstacle which could be thrown in his way, until he declared, concerning the task appointed him, "It is finished;"

5. He that *putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent.*

Who.

Who was so far from desiring to amass the earthly mammon, that he would touch none of it; and received the true riches, only that he might bestow them upon others; who, instead of taking a reward against the innocent, died for the guilty; and whose sentence, when he shall sit on the throne of judgment, will be equally impartial and immutable.

6. *He that doth these things shall never be moved.*

In the above comment, it was thought most advisable to open and display the full intent of what was both enjoined and forbidden, by exemplifying each particular, as receiving its utmost completion, in the character and conduct of our blessed Lord. And whoever shall survey and copy these virtues and graces, as they present themselves in his life, will, it is humbly apprehended, take the best and shortest way to the heavenly Zion, and make that use of the XV. Psalm, which the church may be supposed to have had in view, when she appointed it as one of the proper Psalms for Ascension day.

P S A L M XVI.

ARGUMENT.

Upon whatever occasion, or in whatever distress David might compose this Psalm, we are taught by St Peter and St Paul, Acts ii. 25. and xiii. 35. to consider him as speaking in the person of our Lord Christ, of whom alone the latter part of the Psalm is true. The contents are, 1. a prayer for support; 2, 3. a declaration of love to the saints; 4. a protestation against idolaters; 5—8. acts of love, joy, and confidence in Jehovah; and 9—11. one of hope in an approaching resurrection and glorification.

1. *Preserve me, O God, for in thee do I put my trust.*

These

These words are evidently spoken by one in great distress, who addresses himself to heaven for support under his sufferings, pleading his confidence in God, still unshaken by all the storms that had set themselves against it. This might be the case of David, and may be that of any believer. But since the Psalm is a continued speech without change of person, we may consider the whole as uttered by him, who only could utter the concluding verses, and who in this first verse makes his supplication to the Father, for the promised and expected deliverance.

2. O my soul *thou hast said unto the LORD, thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to thee; 3. But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.*

In the Chaldee and Syriac, the latter clause of the former of these two verses is rendered—"My goodness is from thee." An ingenious writer thinks the Hebrew will bear this sense, in the elliptical way, thus—"My goodness! shall I mention that? By no means; it is all to be ascribed to thee." The goodness of man is all derived from God, and should be extended to his brethren. That of Messiah owed its original to his union with the Divinity; and promoted the salvation of those to whom it was communicated, that is to say, of those who thereby became "the saints and excellent ones in the earth." For their sakes obedience was performed, and propitiation made, by the Son of God, because he loved them with an everlasting love, and placed "all his delight" in making them happy. He "rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights were with the sons of men." Prov. viii. 31.

6. *Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips.*

Christ

Christ denounceth vengeance against those who should make to themselves other gods, run after other favours, or suffer any creature to rival him in their affections; declaring of such, that their offerings should not be presented by him to the Father, nor should they be partakers of the benefits of his intercession. Even the bloody sacrifices of the law, instituted for a time by God himself, became abomination to him when that time was expired, and the one great sacrifice had been offered upon the altar of the cross.

5. *The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup; thou maintainest my lot.* 6. *The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea I have a goodly heritage.*

The true David, anointed to his everlasting kingdom, yet first a man of sorrows and a stranger upon earth, prefers the promised inheritance of the church, that spiritual kingdom, city, and temple of Jehovah, before all the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them; he is sure that Jehovah will maintain his lot, that he will both give and preserve to him this his patrimony; and therefore rejoices at the divine beauty and excellency of the heavenly Canaan. And hence the Christian learns wherein his duty and his happiness consist; namely, in making choice of God for “the portion of his inheritance and of his cup,” for his support and for his delight; in preferring the spirit to the flesh, the church to the world, and eternity to time.

7. *I will bless the LORD who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night season.*

The person speaking here blesses Jehovah for communicating that divine “counsel,” that celestial wisdom, by which he was incited and enabled to make the foregoing choice and resolution. In the

latter part of the verse is intimated the mode of these gracious and spiritual communications, which in the dark seasons of adversity were conveyed to the inmost thoughts and affections of the mind, thereby to instruct, to comfort, and to strengthen the sufferer, until his passion should be accomplished, and the morning of the resurrection should dawn, in which, as we shall see, all his hope and confidence were placed.

8. *I have set the LORD alway before me ; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.*

The method taken by Christ, as man, to support himself in time of trouble, and persevere unto the end, was to maintain a constant actual sense of the presence of Jehovah, whom when he thus saw standing at his right hand, ready, at the appointed hour, to succour and deliver him, he then feared not the powers of earth and hell combined for his destruction. Why are our fears great, but because our faith is little?

9. *Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth ; my flesh also shall rest in hope.*

Through confidence in the almighty power engaged on his side, joy filled the heart of Christ, and rendered his tongue an instrument of giving glory to Jehovah in the midst of his sufferings ; because when they were ended, as they must soon be, his flesh was only to make its bed, and rest a-while in the grave, after the labours of the day, in sure and certain hope of a speedy resurrection and glorification. This same consideration is to the afflicted, the sick, and the dying Christian, a never failing source of comfort, an inexhaustible fountain of joy ; sin and infidelity are the enemies, who would fill it with earth.

10. *For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell ; neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption.*

It

It was a part of the covenant of grace, and promised by the mouth of God's prophets, that after the death of Messiah, his animal frame נפש should not continue, like those of other men, in the grave, לא nor should corruption be permitted to seize on the body, by which all others were to be raised to incorruption and immortality. As members of Christ, this same promise and assurance is so far ours, that although our mortal part must see corruption, yet it shall not be finally left under the power of the enemy, but shall be raised again, and reunited to its old companion the soul, which exists, mean while, in secret and undiscerned regions, there waiting for the day when its Redeemer shall triumph over corruption, in his mystical, as he hath already done, in his natural body.

11. *Thou wilt shew me the path of life ; in thy presence is fulness of joy ; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.*

The return of Christ from the grave is beautifully described by Jehovah "shewing," or discovering to him a "path of life," leading through the valley of the shadow of death, and from that valley to the summit of the hill of Zion, or to the mount of God in heaven, on which he now sits enthroned. There, exalted at the right hand of the Father, that human body, which expired on the cross, and slept in the sepulchre, lives and reigns, filled with delight, and incircled by glory incomprehensible and endless. Through this thy beloved Son and our dear Saviour, "thou shalt shew" us likewise, O Lord, "the path of life;" thou shalt justify our souls by thy grace now, and raise our bodies by thy power at the last day; when earthly sorrow shall terminate in heavenly joy, and momentary pain shall be rewarded with everlasting felicity.

P S A L M XVII.

ARGUMENT.

The Psalmist, confiding in the justice of his cause, 1—4. prayeth for a hearing and decision of it; 5—9. he petitioneth for the divine guidance and protection; 10—12. he describeth the temper and behaviour of his enemies; 13, 14. beseecheth God to disappoint them, and to deliver him; he endeth with an act of faith.

1. *Hear the right, O LORD, or, Hear, O righteous LORD, attend unto my cry, give ear unto my prayer, that goeth not out of feigned lips.*

The righteousness of the judge, and the importunity and sincerity of the petitioner, are the arguments here urged for a speedy and favourable determination. Slander and calumny were the portion of David, and of a greater than David, till the righteous Lord manifested himself on their behalf. And shall not God, in like manner, judge and avenge the cause of “his own elect, who cry day and night unto him? I tell you, saith Christ himself, that he will avenge them speedily.” Luke xviii. 8. “Men ought always to pray, therefore, and not to faint.”

2. *Let my sentence come forth from thy presence: let thine eyes behold the things that are equal.*

A court of equity is ever sitting in heaven, to receive appeals from the wrongful decisions of men here below; and in that court a judge presides, whose impartial hands hold the scales of justice even; whose unerring eye marks the least inclination of either; and from whose sentence injured innocence is therefore taught to expect redress.

3. *Thou hast proved mine heart, thou hast visited me in the night; thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing: I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.*

The

The sufferer's "heart condemns him not, and he has confidence towards God," to whom he applies as the proper judge, because the only witness of his integrity. God had "proved" not only his words and actions, but his "heart," which man could not do: God had "visited," observed, and explored him "in the night," when secrecy and solitude prompt the hypocrite to sin, and when the undisciplined imagination wanders abroad, like the bird of darkness, after forbidden objects; God had "tried" him, as silver or gold, in the fiery furnace of adversity; and if there be any dross or scum in the metal, it will then rise to the top, and shew itself; yet nothing appeared, not so much as the alloy of an intemperate word. Absolutely and universally this could only be true of the holy Jesus, however, through his grace, it may be true of some of his disciples, in particular instances of crimes falsely laid to their charge. Let us pray that it may be true of us, whenever God shall please to prove and try us.

4. *Concerning the works of men, by the word of his lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer.*

The way to hold fast our integrity in time of temptation is here pointed out. "Concerning the works of men," that is, such works as fallen depraved man has recourse to, when in distress, "by the word of thy lips," by treasuring up thy word in my heart, as the rule of my actions, and the guide of my life, "I have watched," observed, that is, in order to avoid "the paths of the destroyer." This seems to be the literal construction, and to convey the full meaning of the verse, which contains exactly the same sentiment with that in Ps. cxix. 11. "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." If the word either be not in the heart at all, or if it be not there in such a man-

ner, as to be ready at all times for use and application, the man is in danger, at every turn, of going astray.

5. *Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.*

The word of God affords us direction, but the grace of God must enable us to follow its direction, and that grace must be obtained by prayer. The “paths of God” are opposed to the “paths of the destroyer,” the way of righteousness to that of sin. The image here is taken from one walking in a slippery path, for such is that of human life, by reason of temptations; so that the believer, especially if he be young, feeble, and inexperienced, has great need of a divine supporter in every step he takes.

6. *I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, or, because thou hast heard me, O God: incline thine ear to me, and hear my speech.*

The sweet experience of former deliverances giveth a comfortable assurance of protection in present and future dangers; and this should cause us to fly for refuge at all times, by strong supplication and prayer, to him who is able and willing to save us from death.

7. *Shew thy marvellous loving kindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust in thee, from those that rise up against them.*

This is an address to the “loving kindness,” or mercy of God, which the Psalmist intreats him to display and magnify in his favour, since it was the promise, the delight, and the glory of Jehovah, to save those who believed and trusted in HIM. There are two ways of rendering the latter clause of this verse; either, “Thou who savest by thy right hand, &c.” as our translation has it; or, “Thou that savest them which put their trust in thee

thee from those that rise up at, or, against thy right hand," meaning the opposers of the divine counsels and dispensations; as in Zech. iii. 1. Satan is said to "stand at Joshua's right hand," to obstruct the building of the temple.

8. *Keep me as the apple of the eye: hide me under the shadow of thy wings.* 9. *From the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies, who compass me about.*

He who has so fenced and guarded that precious and tender part, the pupil of the eye, and who has provided for the security of a young and helpless brood under the wings of their dam, is here intreated to extend the same providential care and parental love to the souls of his elect, equally exposed to danger, equally beset with enemies. Of his readiness so to do he elsewhere assureth us, under the same exquisite imagery. Zech. ii. 8. "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye. Matt. xxiii. 37. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings!"

10. *They are inclosed in their own fat; with their mouth they speak proudly.*

The last argument made use of by the Psalmist in his address to God, is the character of his adversaries. He begins with their "pride," and its cause, "fulness of bread," or high living. Dr Hammond prefers the rendering which follows; "They have shut up their mouth with fat; they speak proudly." Either way the meaning plainly is, that pride is the child of plenty, begotten by self-indulgence, which hardens the hearts of men against the fear of God, and the love of their neighbours; rendering them insensible to the judgments of the former, and the miseries of the latter. Let every man take care,
that,

that, by pampering the flesh, he do not raise up an enemy of this stamp against himself.

11. *They have now compassed us in our steps : they have set their eyes bowing down to the ground.*

“ They have compassed us in our steps ; ” that is, literally, Saul and his followers had watched, pursued, and at last hemmed in David and his men ; “ They have set, or fixed their eyes ” upon us, לנטות בארץ “ to lay us prostrate upon the earth, ” or finally to make an end of us. Such are our spiritual enemies ; such is their intention, and our danger.

12. *Like as a lion that is greedy of his prey, and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places.*

The similitude of a lion, either roaming abroad in quest of his prey, or couching in secret, ready to spring upon it, the moment it comes within his reach, is often employed by David, to describe the power and malice of his enemies. Christians cannot forget, that they likewise have an adversary of the same nature and character ; one ever seeking whom, and contriving how he may devour.

13. *Arise, O LORD, disappoint him, cast him down : deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword ;*

14. *From men which are thy hand, O LORD, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure : they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes.*

The Psalmist, having characterised those who pursued after him to take away his life, now intreats God to “ arise, ” to appear in his cause, to “ disappoint, ” or “ prevent ” the enemy in his designs, and to “ cast him down, ” to overthrow and subdue him. The next words may be thus rendered ; “ Deliver my soul from the wicked by thy sword, from

from men by thy hand, O LORD, from the men of the world;" the expressions, "sword, and hand of Jehovah," being frequently used to denote his power and vengeance. The מְחַיֵּים מֵחַיִּים or "mortals of the transitory world," from whom David prays to be delivered, are said to be such as have "their portion in this life," such as, in our Saviour's language, "have their reward" here, and are not to expect it hereafter; "whose bellies thou fillest with thy hid treasure;" whom thou permittest to enjoy thy temporal blessings in abundance, to "receive their good things" upon earth, and to "fare sumptuously every day;" as if it were to convince us, in what estimation we ought to hold the world, when we see the largest shares of it dealt out to the most worthless of the sons of Adam: "They are full of, or abound in children, and leave the residue of their substance to their babes;" after living in plenty, perhaps to a good old age, they leave behind them a numerous and flourishing posterity, who inherit their estates, and go on, as their fathers did before them, without piety to God, or charity to the poor. From these men and their ways, we have all reason to say with David, "Good Lord deliver us!"

15. *As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.*

Instead of setting our affections on things below, the prophet instructs us, after his example, to place all our happiness in the vision of God, and in that righteousness which leads to it; since the hour is coming, when we shall awake, and arise, after the divine similitude; when we shall be like God, for we shall see him as he is, and by seeing him shall be changed into the same image; and then shall every
desire

desire be satisfied with the fulness of joy, with the exceeding abundance of unutterable glory.

III DAY. EVENING PRAYER. PSALM XVIII.

ARGUMENT.

This Psalm, as we are informed by the sacred history, Sam. xxii. 1. was composed and sung by David, in the day the Lord had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul. It contains, ver. 1—3. an address of thanks to Jehovah; 4—6. a relation of sufferings under gone, and prayers made for assistance; 7—15. a magnificent description of the divine interposition in favour of the sufferer, and 16—19. of the deliverance wrought for him, 20—24. in consideration of his righteousness, 25—28. according to the tenor of God's equitable proceedings; 29—36. to Jehovah is ascribed the glory of the victory, which 37—42. is represented as every way compleat, by the destruction of all opponents, and 43—45. the submission of the heathen; for these events 46—50. God is blessed and praised. As the sublimity of the figures used in this Psalm, and the consent of ancient commentators, even Jewish as well as Christian, but above all, the citations made from it in the New Testament, do evince, that the kingdom of Messiah, is here pointed at, under that of David, an application is therefore made of the whole, in the ensuing comment, to the sufferings, resurrection, righteousness, and conquests of Christ, to the destruction of the Jews, and conversion of the Gentiles. In a word, the Psalm, it is apprehended, should now be considered as a glorious epinikion, or triumphal hymn, to

to be sung by the church, risen and victorious in Christ her Head.

1. *I will love thee, O LORD my strength.*

Let us suppose king Messiah, like his illustrious progenitor of old, seated in peace and triumph upon the throne designed and prepared for him. From thence let us imagine him taking a retrospect view of the sufferings he had undergone, the battles he had fought, and the victories he had gained. With this idea duly impressed upon our minds, we shall be able, in some measure, to conceive the force of the words, “אֶהְרֹמֶךָ With all the yearnings of affection I will love thee, O Jehovah my strength, through my union with whom, I have finished my work, and am now exalted to praise thee, in the name of a redeemed world.” Whenever we sing this Psalm, let us think we are singing it in conjunction with our Saviour, newly risen from the dead; a consideration, which surely will incite us to do it with becoming gratitude and devotion.

1. *The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my strength in whom I trust, my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.*

In other words, explanatory of the figures here made use of, Through Jehovah it is, that I have stood immoveable amidst a sea of temptations and afflictions; he has supported me under my troubles, and delivered me out of them; his protection has secured me, his power has broken and scattered mine enemies; and by his mercy and truth am I now set up on high above them all.—How lovely these strains, in the mouth of the church militant! How glorious will they be, when sung by the church triumphant! It is observable, that the words, “in whom I trust,” or, as the original has it, “I will trust

trust in him," are referred to, in the margin of our English Bible, as quoted from this verse by St Paul, Heb. ii. 13. If it be so, the reader, by turning to the place, may furnish himself with a demonstration, that in the xviii. as well as in the xvi. Psalm, David speaks in the person of Christ.

3. *I will, or, did call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised; so shall I be, or, so was I saved from mine enemies.*

As the Psalm so evidently throughout is a thanksgiving for past deliverances, the verbs in this verse seem to require the same rendring which is given to them below, at ver. 6. Jehovah is to be "called upon," both in adversity and in prosperity; in the former with the voice of prayer, in the latter with that of praise. "Is any afflicted?" saith St James, v. 13. "Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing Psalms."

4. *The sorrows, or, cords, of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men, or, Belial made me afraid.* 5. *The sorrows, or, cords, of hell, or, the grave compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me.*

St Peter, in his sermon on the day of Pentecost, says, when speaking of Christ—"Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." Acts ii. 24. Now, "the Hebrew word חבל (as Dr Hammond well observes on that place) signifies two things, a *cord* or *band*, and a *pang*, especially of women in travail; Hence the LXX meeting with the word, Pf. xviii. where it certainly signifies χοῖνα, *cords*, or *bands*) have yet rendered it ὀδινες, *pangs*; and from their example here St Luke hath used τὰς ὀδινὰς θανάτου, the *pains* or *pangs* of death, when both the addition of the word λύσας *loosing*, and

αἰχμαλωτῶν being *holden fast*, do shew the sense is *bands*, or *corde*s." From the passage in the Acts, with this learned and judicious remark upon it, we obtain not only the true rendering of the phrase "חַבְלֵי מוֹת cords, or bands of death," but also something more than an intimation that, in the verses of our Psalm now before us, David speaks of Christ, that "the cords of death," those "bands" due to our sins, "compassed him about, and the floods of Belial," the powers of darkness and ungodliness, like an overwhelming torrent breaking forth from the bottomless pit "made him afraid," in the day of his agony, when the apprehensions of the bitter cup cast his soul into unutterable amazement, and he beheld himself environed by those "snares," which had captivated and detained all the children of Adam. David, surrounded by Saul and his blood thirty attendants, was a lively emblem of the suffering Jesus, and therefore the same description is applicable to both; as the words of the second Psalm, in like manner, celebrate the inauguration of the son of Jesse, and that of the Son of God.

6. *In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears.*

David was in distress; David called upon Jehovah, the God of Israel, who dwelt between the Cherubims in the holy place; and by him the prayer of David was heard. Much greater was the distress of Christ, who likewise, as St Paul speaks, "in the days of his flesh offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard;" Heb. v. 7. his voice ascended to the eternal temple, his powerful cry pierced the ears of the Father everlasting, and brought salvation from heaven at

the time appointed. The church also is distressed upon earth, she crieth, her cries are heard, and will be answered in the day of God.

7. Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth.

At this verse the Prophet begins to describe the manifestation of divine power in favour of the Righteous Sufferer. The imagery employed is borrowed from Mount Sinai, and those circumstances which attended the delivery of the law from thence. When a monarch is angry, and prepares for war, his whole kingdom is instantly in commotion. Universal nature is here represented as feeling the effects of its sovereign's displeasure, and all the visible elements are disordered. The earth shakes from its foundations, and all its rocks and mountains tremble before the majesty of their Creator, when he ariseth in judgment. This was really the case at the resurrection of our Lord from the dead; when as the Evangelists inform us, "there was a great earth-quake," and the grave owned its inability any longer to detain the blessed body, which had been committed, for a season, to its custody. And what happened at the resurrection of Jesus, should remind us of what shall happen, when the earth shall tremble, and the dead shall be raised, at the last day.

8. There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it; or, fire out of his mouth devoured, with burning coals from before him.

The farther effects of God's indignation are represented by those of fire, which is the most terrible of the created elements, burning and consuming all before it, scorching the ground, and causing the mountains to smoke. Under this appearance God descended

descended on the top of Sinai : thus he visited the cities of the plain ; and thus he is to come at the end of time. Whenever therefore he is described as shewing forth his power and vengeance for the salvation of his chosen, and the discomfiture of his enemies, a “devouring fire” is the emblem made choice of, to convey proper ideas of such his manifestations. And from hence we may conceive the heat of his wrath against the adversaries of man’s salvation, when, by raising his Son Jesus from the dead, he blasted their schemes, and withered all their strength.

9. *He bowed the heavens also, and came down ; and darkness was under his feet.* 10. *And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly ; yea, he did fly on the wings of the wind.* 11. *He made darkness his secret place ; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies.*

Storms and tempests in the element of air are instruments of the divine displeasure, are therefore selected as figures of it. When God descends from above, the clouds of heaven compose an awful and gloomy tabernacle, in the midst of which he is supposed to reside : the reins of whirlwinds are in his hand, and he directs their impetuous course through the world ; the whole artillery of the aerial regions is at his command to be by him employed against his enemies, in the day of battle and war.

12. *At the brightness that was before him, his thick clouds passed, hail stones and coals of fire.* 13. *The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice ; hail stones and coals of fire.* 14. *Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them ; and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them.*

The discharge of the celestial artillery upon the adverse powers is here magnificently described. Terrible it was to them, as when lightnings and thun-

ders, hail stones and balls of fire, making their way through the dark clouds which contain them, strike terror and dismay into the hearts of men. Such is the "voice," and such are the "arrows" of the Lord Almighty, wherewith he "discomfiteth" all who oppose the execution of his counsels, and obstruct the salvation of his chosen. Every display and description of this sort, and indeed every thunder storm which we behold, should remind us of that exhibition of power and vengeance, which is hereafter to accompany the general resurrection.

15. *Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils.*

As the former part of the Psalmist's description was taken from the appearance on Mount Sinai, so this latter part seems evidently to allude to what passed at the Red Sea, when by the breath of God the waters were divided, the depths were discovered, and Israel was conducted in safety through them. By that event was prefigured the salvation of the church universal, through, the death and resurrection of Christ, who descended into the lower parts of the earth, and from thence reascended to light and life. The xivth chapter of Exodus, which relates the passage of Israel through the Red Sea, is therefore appointed as one of the Proper lessons on Easter Day. And thus we obtain the ideas intended to be conveyed in this sublime but difficult verse, together with their application to the grand deliverance of the true David, in the day of God's power. Indeed it is not easy to accommodate to any part of the history of the son of Jesse those awful, majestic, and stupendous images, which are made use of throughout this whole description of the divine manifestation, from verse 7. But however this
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be, most certainly every part of so solemn a scene of terrors forbids us to doubt but that a "GREATER than David is here;" since creation scarce affords colours brighter and stronger than those here employed, wherewith to paint the appearance of Jehovah, at the day of final redemption.

16. *He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many, or, the great waters.* 17. *He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me.*

For this purpose did God in so wonderful a manner display his power and glory, that he might deliver the sufferer out of his troubles. This deliverance is first expressed metaphorically, by "drawing him out of the great waters," and then plainly, "he delivered me from my strong enemy," &c. The "great waters," in ver. 16. are the same with "the floods of the ungodly," in ver. 4. By these was Messiah, like David, oppressed and overwhelmed for a time; but, like David, he arose at length superior to them all. The "strong enemy" was obliged to give way to a "stronger than he, who overcame him, and took from him his armour in which he trusted, and divided the spoil." Luke xi. 22.

18. *They prevented me in the day of my calamity, but the LORD was my stay.* 19. *He brought me forth also into a large place: he delivered me, because he delighted in me.*

The divine mercy is celebrated again and again through this sacred hymn, in a variety of expressions. Innumerable foes "prevented," that is, surrounded, inclosed Christ on all sides, "in the day of his calamity," when the powers of earth and hell set themselves in array against him: but "Jehovah was his stay;" on him he reposed an unshaken confidence; Jehovah therefore supported his steps,

and led him on to victory and triumph: from the narrow confines of the grave he translated him to unbounded empire, because he was the son of his love, in whom he delighted.

20. *The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.* 21. *For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God:* 22. *For all his judgments were before me, and I did not put away his statutes from me.* 23. *I was also upright before him: and I kept from mine iniquity; or, from iniquities.* 24. *Therefore hath the LORD recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight.*

Commentators have been much perplexed to account for these unlimited claims to righteousness made by David, and that, long after the matter of Uriah, and towards the close of life. Certain indeed it is, that the expressions, considered as David's, must be confined either to his steadfast adherence to the true worship in opposition to idolatry, or to his innocence with regard to some particular crimes falsely alledged against him by his adversaries. But if the Psalm be prophetical, and sung by the victorious Monarch in the person of King Messiah; then do the verses now before us no less exactly than beautifully delineate that all perfect righteousness wrought by the Redeemer, in consequence of which, he obtained deliverance for himself and his people. For "His" righteousness sake Jehovah was well pleased, and rewarded with everlasting felicity the unspotted purity of his works; "He" performed an unfinning obedience to every part of the law, and swerved not from its line in a single instance; the rule was ever in his eye, and no temptation could induce him to deviate from its direction;

rection; like the light, he passed through all things undefiled, and his garments were white as the lily: therefore a glorious kingdom was given unto him, forasmuch as in him the piercing eye of heaven, could discover no blemish at all.

25. *With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful, with an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright.* 26. *With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure, and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward; Heb. with the perverse thou wilt wrestle, or strive.*

The reason is here assigned why God "recompensed Messiah according to the cleanness of his hands," namely, because he is just, in rendering to every man according to his works. He who is "merciful" to his brethren, shall obtain the divine mercy; he who is "upright" in his dealings with others, will have justice done him by the great Judge, against his iniquitous oppressors; he who is "pure" from deceit and hypocrisy in the service of his God, shall experience in himself a faithful and exact performance of the promises which God hath made to such; but the man that is "froward," perverse, and rebellious, must expect to grapple with an arm, which will either humble, or destroy. See Levit. xxvi. 3, 4, &c. 23, 24, &c. 1 Kings viii. 32. Prov. iii. 34.

27. *For thou wilt save the afflicted, or, lowly people; but wilt bring down high looks.*

"God resisteth the proud," saith an Apostle, "and giveth grace to the humble." James iv. 6. And, indeed, what is the covenant of grace, but a covenant to humble pride, and to exalt humility; what was it, but the humility of Christ, that subdued the pride of Satan; and on what does the salvation of every man depend, but on the issue of the contest between these two principles in his heart? †

28. *For thou wilt, or, dost light my candle, or lamp, the LORD my GOD will, or, does enlighten my darkness.*

An instance of God's favour towards the lowly and afflicted was the salvation vouchsafed to the suffering Jesus, who, like David, after much tribulation and persecution, under which he sunk for a time, even so low as to the grave itself, was exalted to glory and honour. This change of condition is set forth by that of a "lamp," from a state of extinction to one of illumination, darkness being a well known emblem of sorrow and death, as light is the established symbol of life and joy. Remarkable are the words of the Chaldee Paraphrast upon this verse, cited by Dr Hammond—"Because thou shalt enlighten the lamp of Israel, which is put out in the captivity, for thou art the author of the light of Israel: the Lord my God shall lead me out of darkness into light, and shall make me see the consolation of the age which shall come to the just."

20. *For by thee I have run through, or broken, a troop: and by my God have I leaped over a wall.*

Through the power of his divinity, the captain of our salvation vanquished the host of darkness, and escaped from the sepulchre, notwithstanding all their precautions to confine him there. Vain is every effort, by whomsoever it is made, against the counsels of omnipotence. And let us reflect, for our comfort, that they who could not prevent the resurrection of Christ, cannot detain the soul of a Christian in sin, or his body in the grave.

30. *As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him.*

The "way" of God is the course of his proceedings with men, and its "perfection" consists in the equity of those proceedings: the promises made in "the word of Jehovah" to his servants, are "tried"

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in times of affliction and persecution, as gold in the fire, and found pure from any dross of deceit, or fallibility: he is ever a "shield," to protect "those who trust in him," during their stay here, until he becomes their "exceeding great reward" hereafter. All this he has been to the Head, in order that he may be all this to the members of the church.

31. *For who is God, save the LORD? Or who is a rock, save our God?*

"Jehovah" alone is the "God," or covenanted Saviour of his people; he is the only "rock," on which they may securely build their hope of heaven. Vain were the idols of the ancient world, Baal and Jupiter; as vain are those of modern times, Pleasure, Honour, and Profit. They cannot bestow content, or make their votaries happy below; much less can they deliver from death, or open the everlasting doors above.

32. *It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect.*

In this and the following verses are enumerated the gifts of God to the spiritual warrior, whereby he is armed and prepared for the battle, after the example of his victorious leader. God invests him with "strength," or what the Apostle calls "the spirit of might in the inner man," as the loins of a foldier are braced by the military girdle; whence that of St Paul, "having your loins girt about with truth." He removes every thing that may impede his progress, until he has accomplished his warfare, and finished his course in righteousness, which seems to be what is meant by "making his way perfect."

33. *He maketh my feet like hind's feet, and setteth me upon high places.*

He endueth the affections, which are the feet of the soul, with vigour and agility, to run the way
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of his commandments, to surmount every obstacle, and, with an activity like that of the swift hart, or the bounding roe, to conquer the steep ascent of the everlasting hills, and gain the summit of the heavenly mountain. St Paul tells us how the feet must be shod, for this purpose, namely, "with the preparation of the gospel of peace."

34. *He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arm.*

He communicates a wisdom and a power which nothing can withstand, instructing and enabling the combatant to overcome in the conflict, to seize and render useless the weapons of the adversary. St Paul puts into the Christian warrior's hand, "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

35. *Thou hast given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness, or, thy afflictions, have made me great.*

The salvation of God is a defence against all temptations, to such as believe in it; whence St Paul styles this piece of armour, "the shield of FAITH, wherewith," says he, "ye may be able to quench all the fiery darts of the devil." The "right hand" of God must support and sustain us at all times; and the wholesome discipline of the Christian camp, the chastisements and corrections of our heavenly Father, must train us up to true greatness, and prepare us for the kingdom of heaven. The soldiers, like their great Leader, must be "made perfect through sufferings."

36. *Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that, or, and, my feet did not slip.*

In other words, God had opened a free course for him to victory and triumph, and had also endued him with strength to run that course; thus removing the two mischievous effects of sin, which

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not only precluded the way to heaven, but deprived us of the ability to travel in it.

37. I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaken them; neither did I turn again till they were consumed. 38. I have wounded them that they were not able to rise: they are fallen under my feet.

If we suppose David in his conquests to have prefigured victorious Messiah, then have we, in these and the subsequent verses, a sublime description of that vengeance, which Jesus, after his resurrection and ascension, inflicted on his hardened and impenitent enemies. His wrath "pursued" and "overtook" them, in the day of visitation; nor did it return, till, like a devouring fire, it had "consumed" the prey. The Jews were cast down, "not able to rise," or lift up themselves as a people, being crushed under the feet of the once despised and insulted Nazarene. Let us reflect upon the impotence of our spiritual adversaries, when Jesus declares war against them; and let us beseech him to conquer them in us, as he has conquered them for us.

39. For thou hast girded me with strength unto battle; thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me. 40. Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies; that I might destroy them that hate me.

With the almighty power of the Godhead was Jesus invested, by which all enemies were subdued unto him; the stiff "necks" of his crucifiers were bowed under him, and utter destruction became the portion of those who hated him, and had "sent after him, saying, we will not have this man to reign over us." So gird us thy soldiers and servants, O Lord Jesus, to the battle, and subdue under us, by the power of thy grace, those that rise up against us, whether they be our own corrupt desires, or the malicious spirits of darkness; so give us, like another Joshua,
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the “necks” of these our enemies, that we may destroy them that hate, and would destroy us.

41. *They cried, but there was none to save them; even to the LORD, but he answered them not.*

Never was there a more just and lively portrait of the lamentable and desperate state of the Jews, when their calamities came upon them. “They cried, but—none to save!” They had rejected him who alone could save, and who was now about to destroy them. They cried to Jehovah, and thought themselves still his favourite nation; but Jehovah and Jesus were one; so that after putting the latter from them, they could not retain the former on their side. “He answered them not!” It was too late to knock, when the door was shut; too late to cry for mercy, when it was the time of justice. Let us knock, while yet the door may be opened; and not begin to pray, when prayer shall be no longer heard.

42. *Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind; I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets.*

The nature of that judgment which was executed upon the Jews, cannot be more accurately delineated, than by the two images here made use of. ‘They were broken in pieces, and dispersed over the face of the earth by the breath of God’s displeasure, like “dust before the wind; and as dirt in the streets, they were cast out,” to be trodden under foot by all nations. O that every nation would so consider, as to avoid, their crime and their punishment.

43. *Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people, and thou hast made me the head of the heathen: a people whom I have not known shall serve me.*

If David was delivered from the strivings of the people; if the adjacent heathen nations were added to his kingdom, and a “people, whom he had not known,

known, served him;" how much more was this the case of the son of David, when he was "delivered," by his resurrection, from the power of all his enemies; when he was made "head of the heathen," of whom, after their conversion, his church was, and to this day is composed; and when, instead of the rejected Jews, a people, to whom before he had not been known, became his servants?

44. *As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me.* 45. *The strangers shall fade away, and be afraid out of their close places.*

"As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me;" hereby is intimated the readiness with which the Gentiles should flow into the church, upon the preaching of the Gospel to them, when the Jews, after having so long and so often heard it, had nailed Christ to the cross, and driven the Apostles out from among them. "The strangers shall submit themselves unto me;" the nations who were "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise," either cordially submitted to the sceptre of Christ, or at least dissembled their hostility, and yielded a feigned submission; (for so the word *נָחַם* sometimes signifies;) "the strangers shall fade away;" that is, such of them as set themselves against me, shall find their strength blasted and withered as a leaf in autumn, and shall fall at the sound of my name and my victories; "they shall be afraid out of their close places;" or rather, "they shall come trembling from their strong holds," as places not able to protect them, and therefore they will sue for peace. Such seems to be the import of these two verses, which therefore denote the conquest of Messiah to have been every way compleat. And accordingly, in the re-

maining part of the Psalm, the church, through Christ her Head, bleſſeth Jehovah for the ſame.

46. *The LORD liveth, and bleſſed be my rock; and let the God of my ſalvation be exalted.* 47. *It is God that avengeth me, and ſubdueth the people under me.* 48. *He delivereth me from mine enemies; yea, thou liſteſt me up above thoſe that riſe up againſt me; thou haſt delivered me from the violent man.*

In other words, “And now, the Lord God omnipotent liveth and reigneth, for ever bleſſed and exalted, as the God of ſalvation: by him I am avenged of thoſe who perſecuted me, and am advanced to empire; my enemies are fallen, and my throne is eſtabliſhed.” Thus we learn to truſt in Jehovah without fear, when our enemies are victorious, and to glorify him without reſerve, when we are ſo.

49. *Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and ſing praises unto thy name.*

Remarkable is the manner in which St Paul cites this verſe, Rom. xv. 9. The context runs thus. “Now I ſay, that Jeſus Chriſt was a miniſter of the circumciſion for the truth of God, to confirm the promiſes made unto the fathers: and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cauſe I will confeſs to thee among the Gentiles, and ſing unto thy name.” This verſe is by the Apoſtle produced as a proof, that the Gentiles were one day to glorify God, for the mercy vouchſafed them by Jeſus Chriſt. But according to the letter of the paſſage, king David only ſays, that he will “give thanks unto God among the heathen,” on account of his own deliverance, and exaltation to the throne of Iſrael; for upon that occaſion we know that he compoſed and ſung the Psalm. This citation brought by St Paul cannot therefore be to
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the purpose for which it is brought, unless the Psalm have a double sense; unless God be glorified in it for the victory and inthronization of Christ, as well as for those of David; and this cannot be, unless the same words which literally celebrate the one, do likewise prophetically celebrate the other; unless David be a figure of Christ, and speak in his person, and in that of his body the church. While this Psalm is used, as a Christian hymn, in the Gentile Christian church, David still continues, as he foresaw he should do, "to give thanks unto Jehovah, to glorify God among the Gentiles," for the mercies of redemption, and to "sing praises unto his name." *

59. Great deliverances giveth he to his King: and sheweth mercy to his Anointed, to David and to his seed for evermore.

"Great deliverance giveth he unto his King;" to King David, in saving him from Saul and his other temporal enemies, and seating him on the earthly throne of Israel; to King Messiah, in rescuing him from death and the grave, and exalting him to an heavenly throne, as Head of the Church: "and sheweth mercy to his Anointed;" to him who was anointed outwardly, and in a figure, with oil; and to him who was anointed inwardly, and in truth, with the Holy Ghost and with power: "to David and to his seed for evermore;" to the literal David, and to his royal progeny, of whom, according to the flesh, Christ came; and to Christ himself, the spiritual David, the Beloved of God, with all those who through faith become his children, the sons of God, and heirs of eternal life.

* "This verse is applied in Rom. xv. 2. to the calling of the Gentiles unto the faith of Christ, and praise unto God *therefore*. By which we are taught, that of *Christ and his kingdom* this Psalm is **CHIEFLY** intended." Ainsworth.

IV DAY. MORNING PRAYER. PSALM XIX.

ARGUMENT.

In the former part of this beautiful Psalm, ver. 1—6. the heavens are represented as the instructors of mankind; the subject, the universality, and the manner of their instructions are pointed out; the glory, beauty, and powerful effects of the solar light are described. The latter part of the Psalm 7—14. contains an encomium on the word of God, in which its properties are enumerated; and a prayer of the Psalmist for pardoning and restraining grace, and for the acceptance of these and all other his devotions and meditations. From a citation which St Paul hath made of the 4th verse, it appears, that, in the exposition, we are to raise our thoughts from things natural to things spiritual; we are to contemplate the publication of the Gospel, the manifestation of the Light of Life, the Sun of Righteousness, and the efficacy of evangelical doctrine. In this view the ancients have considered the Psalm, and the church hath therefore appointed it to be read on Christmas day.

1. *The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handy work.*

Under the name of “heaven,” or, “the heavens,” is comprehended that fluid mixture of light and air, which is every where diffused about us; and to the influences of which, are owing all the beauty and fruitfulness of the earth, all vegetable and animal life, and the various kinds of motion throughout the system of nature. By their manifold and beneficial operations, therefore, as well as by their beauty and magnificence, “the heavens declare the glory of God;” they point Him out to us, who, in Scrip-
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ture language, is stiled "the glory of God;" by whom themselves and all other things were made, and are upholden; and who is the author of every grace and blessing, to the sons of men: "the firmament," or expansion of the celestial elements, wherever it extends, "sheweth his handy work," not only as the Creator, but likewise as the Redeemer of the world. And thus do the heavens afford inexhaustible matter, for contemplation and devotion, to the philosopher, and to the Christian.

2. *Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.*

The labours of these our instructors know no intermission, but they continue incessantly to lecture us in the science of divine wisdom. There is one glory of the sun, which shines forth by day; and there are other glories of the moon and of the stars, which become visible by night. And because day and night interchangeably divide the world between them, they are therefore represented as transmitting in succession, each to other, the task enjoined them, like the two parts of a choir, chanting forth alternately the praises of God. How does inanimate nature reproach us with our indolence and indevotion!

3. *There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.*

Our translators, by the words inserted in a different character, have declared their sense of this passage to be, that there is no nation or language, whither the instruction diffused by the heavens doth not reach. But as the same thought is so fully expressed in the next verse, "Their sound is gone out," &c. it seems most advisable to adhere to the original, which runs literally thus, "No speech, no words, their voice is not heard;" that is, although

the heavens are thus appointed to teach, yet it is not by articulate sounds that they do it; they are not endowed, like man, with the faculty of speech; but they address themselves to the mind of the intelligent beholder in another way, and that, when understood, a no less forcible way, the way of picture, or representation. So manifold is the wisdom of God; so various are the ways by which he communicates it to men.

4. *Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.*

The instruction which the heavens disperse abroad is universal as their substance, which extends itself in “lines,” or rays, “over all the earth;” by this means their “words,” or rather their “*significant actions” and operations, are every where present, even “to the ends of the world;” and thereby they preach to all nations the power and wisdom, the mercy and loving kindness of the Lord. The Apostles’ commission was the same with that of the heavens; and St Paul, Rom. x. 18. has applied the natural images in this verse to the manifestation of the Light of Life, by the sermons of those who were sent forth for that purpose. He is speaking of those Jews who had not obeyed the Gospel. “But I say,” argues he, “have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went unto all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.” As if he had said, They must have heard, since the Apostles were commanded not to turn unto the Gentiles, till they had published their glad tidings throughout Judea; but the knowledge of him is now become universal, and all flesh has seen the Glory of the Lord; the
Light

* מליהם—The verb מלל (whence מלי words) is used for expressing the meaning by signs. It has this sense Prov. vi. 13. מלל ברגלו speaking with his foot.

Light Divine, like that in the heavens, has visited the whole world, as the prophet David foretold, in the xix. Psalm. The Apostle cannot be supposed to have made use of this Scripture in a sense of accommodation only, because he cites it among other texts which he produces merely as prophecies. And if such be its meaning, if the heavens thus declare the Glory of God, and this is the great lesson they are incessantly teaching; what other language do they speak, than that their Lord is the representative of ours, the bright ruler in the natural world of the more glorious one in the spiritual, their sun of the "Sun of Righteousness?" But of this the following verses will lead us to speak more particularly.

5. *In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.*

In the centre of the heavens there is a tent pitched by the Creator for the residence of that most glorious of inanimate substances, the solar light; from thence it issues, with the beauty of a bridegroom, and the vigour of a champion, to run its course, and perform its operations. A tabernacle, in like manner, was prepared for him, who saith of himself, "I am the LIGHT of the world." John viii. 12. And as the light of the sun goes out in the morning with inconceivable activity, new and youthful itself, and communicating life and gaiety to all things round it, like a bridegroom, in the marriage garment, from his chamber to his nuptials; so, at his incarnation, did the Light Divine, the promised bridegroom, visit his church, being clad himself, and cloathing her with that robe of righteousness, which is stiled, in holy Scripture, the marriage garment; and the joy, which his presence administered, was, like the benefits of it,
universal.

universal. And as the material light is always ready to run its heavenly race, daily issuing forth with renewed vigour, like an invincible champion still fresh to labour; so likewise did HE rejoice to run his glorious race; he excelled in strength, and his works were great and marvellous; he triumphed over the powers of darknefs; he shed abroad on all sides his bright beams upon his church; he became her deliverer, her protector, and support; and shewed himself able in every respect to accomplish for her the mighty task he had undertaken. What a marvellous instrument of the most High is the sun, at his rising, considered in this view!

6. *His going forth is from the end of heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it; and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.*

The light, diffused on every side from its fountain, extendeth to the extremities of heaven, filling the whole circle of creation, penetrating even to the inmost substances of grosser bodies, and acting in and through all other matter, as the general cause of life and motion. Thus unbounded and efficacious was the influence of the Sun of Righteousness, when he sent out his word, enlightening and enlivening all this by the glory of his grace. His celestial rays, like those of the sun, took their circuit round the earth; they went forth out of Judea into all parts of the habitable world, and there was no corner of it so remote as to be without the reach of their penetrating and healing power. "The Lord gave the word, great was the company of those that published it." Ps. lxxviii. 11. It was the express declaration of our Saviour himself, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come." Mat. xxiv. 14. And St Paul affirms

affirms, that the gospel was “come unto all the world, and had been preached to every creature under heaven.” Col. i. 6, and 23. The prophet therefore, having thus foretold the mission of the Apostles, and the success of their ministry, proceeds in the next place to describe their “doctrine;” so that what follows is a fine encomium upon the gospel, written with all the simplicity peculiar to the sacred language, and in a strain far surpassing the utmost efforts of human eloquence.

7. *The law, or, doctrine of the Lord is perfect, converting, or, restoring the soul, the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.*

The word of God, in this and the following verses, has several most valuable properties ascribed to it. It is perfectly well adapted, in every particular, to “convert,” to restore, to bring back “the soul” from error to truth, from sin to righteousness, from sickness to health, from death to life; as it convinces of sin, it holds forth a Saviour, it is a means of grace, and a rule of conduct. It giveth wisdom, and by wisdom stability, to those who might otherwise, through ignorance and weakness, be easily deceived and led astray; “it is sure,” certain and infallible in its directions and informations, “making wise the simple.”

8. *The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.*

To those who study the righteousness of God therein communicated to man, it becometh a never failing source of consolation and holy joy; the conscience of the reader is cleansed by the blood, and rectified by the spirit of Christ; and such a conscience is a continual feast: “the statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart.” The
divine

divine word resembleth the light in its brightness and purity, by which are unveiled and manifested to the eyes of the understanding, the wonderful works and dispensations of God, the state of man, the nature of sin, the way of salvation, the joys of heaven, and the pains of hell: "the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes."

9. *The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever; the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.*

"The fear of the LORD," which restrains from transgressing that law by which it is bred in the heart, is in its effect a preservative of mental purity, and in the duration both of its effect, and its reward, eternal; it "endureth for ever. The judgments of the LORD are" not, like those of men, oftentimes wrong and unjust, but all his determinations in his word are "truth and righteousness united" in perfection.

10. *More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honeycomb.*

What wonder is it, that this converting, instructing, exhilarating, enlightening, eternal, true, and righteous word should be declared preferable to the riches of eastern kings, and sweeter to the soul of the pious believer, than the sweetest thing we know of is to the bodily taste? How ready are we to acknowledge all this! Yet, the next hour, perhaps, we part with the true riches to obtain the earthly mammon, and barter away the joys of the spirit for the gratifications of sense! Lord, give us affections towards thy word in some measure proportioned to its excellence; for we can never love too much what we can never admire enough.

11. *Moreover by them is thy servant warned; and in keeping of them there is great reward.*

The

The Psalmist here bears his own testimony to the character above given of the divine word; as if he had said, The several parts of this perfect law, hereafter to be published to the whole race of mankind, have been all along my great instructors, and the only source of all the knowledge to which thy servant hath attained; and I am fully assured, that the blessed fruit of them, when they are duly observed, and have their proper effect, is exceeding glorious, even eternal life.

12. *Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults.*

The perfection and spirituality of God's law render it almost impossible for a fallen son of Adam even to know all the innumerable instances of his transgressing it. Add to which, that false principles and inveterate prejudices make us regard many things as innocent, and some things as laudable, which in the eye of heaven are far otherwise. Self-examination is a duty which few practise as they ought to do: and he who practises it best, will always have reason to conclude his particular confessions with this general petition, "Cleanse thou me from secret faults!"

13. *Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins, let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.*

In the preceding verse, David had implored God's pardoning grace, to cleanse him from the secret sins of ignorance and infirmity: in this, he begs his restraining grace, to keep him back from presumptuous sins, or sins committed knowingly, deliberately, and with an high hand, against the convictions and the remonstrances of conscience: he prays that such sins might not "have dominion
over

over him," or that he might not, by contracting evil habits, become the slave of an imperious lust, which might at length lead him on to "the great transgression," to rebellion, to final apostacy from God; for he who would be innocent from the "great transgression," must beware of indulging himself in any.

14. *Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.*

The prophet, having before solicited the justification of his person through grace, concludes with a petition for the acceptance of all his offerings, and more especially of these his meditations, at the hands of that blessed One, whom he addresses as the author of all good, and the deliverer from all evil; as the "strength," and the "Redeemer" of his people*.

PSALM XX.

ARGUMENT.

1—4. The church prayeth for the prosperity of King Messiah, going forth to the battle, as her champion and deliverer; for his acceptance by the Father, and for the accomplishment of his will. 5, 6, 7. She declareth her full assurance of

* If the reader shall have received any pleasure from perusing the comment on the foregoing Psalm, especially the first part of it, he is to be informed, that he stands indebted, on that account, to a Discourse entitled, CHRIST THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD, published in the year 1750, by the late Reverend Mr GEORGE WATSON, for many years the dear companion and kind director of the author's studies; in attending to whose agreeable and instructive conversation, he has often passed whole days together, and shall always have reason to number them among the best spent days of his life; whose death he can never think of, without lamenting it afresh; and to whose memory he embraces, with pleasure, this opportunity to pay the tribute of a grateful heart.

of faith, and her resolution to trust in him alone, and not in the arm of flesh. 8. She foreseeth the fall of her enemies, and her own exaltation; and 9. concludeth with a prayer to the God of her strength.

1. *The LORD hear thee in the day of trouble, the name of the God of Jacob defend thee.*

This may be considered as the address of a people to their king, when he goeth forth to the battle against their enemies. But it is to be regarded, in a more general and useful view, as the address of the church to Christ her king, in "the day of his trouble." She prayeth for the happy accomplishment of his warfare, through "the Name of the God of Jacob," dwelling in him. And this warfare, though accomplished in his own person, still remaineth to be accomplished in his people, until the last enemy shall be destroyed, and death shall be swallowed up in victory. It is still "the day of trouble;" still "the name of the God of Jacob" must "defend" the body of Christ.

2. *Send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Sion.*

All help and strength, in the time of danger and sorrow, must be obtained by prayer from the heavenly Sion which is in the Jerusalem above, and from the eternal temple thereon constructed. By this "help and strength," the captain of our salvation conquered; and the church with all her sons, must conquer, through the same.

3. *Remember all thy offerings and accept thy burnt sacrifice.*

As Christ, in the days of his flesh, offered up, not only prayers and tears, but, at length, his own most precious body and blood, the church here prays, that the great propitiatory sacrifice may be had in

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everlasting remembrance before God, and the merits of it to be continually pleaded in arrest of judgment, and accepted for herself and her children.

4. *Grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfil all thy counsel.*

The desire of Christ's heart, and the counsel of his will was, that he might die for our sins, and rise again for our justification; that the Gospel might be preached, the Gentiles called, the Jews converted, the dead raised, and the elect glorified. That this his "desire might be granted," and this his "counsel be fulfilled," the church of old prayed; and the church now prayeth for the accomplishment of that which yet remains to be accomplished.

5. *We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners; the LORD fulfil all thy petitions.*

The joy of the church is in the salvation of Christ; and the joy of every individual is in the application of that salvation to himself, and all around him. In the name of Jesus, and under the banner of the cross, the armies of the faithful undertake and carry on all their enterprises against the world, the flesh, and the devil. The prospect of the glorious fruits of Christ's victory caused the church to redouble her prayers, that he might be heard in his "petitions" for mankind, and might see of the travail of his soul.

6. *Now know I, that the LORD saveth his anointed; he will hear him from his holy heaven, with the saving strength of his right hand.*

The assurance of the ancient church was built on the prophecies going before concerning the salvation of Messiah. Our assurance is strengthened by the actual performance of so great a part of the counsel of God. We know that the LORD has "saved his anointed;" that his anointed saveth all, who believe
and

and obey him, from their sins; and therefore, we doubt not, but that, by “the strength of his right hand,” or by the excellency of his power, he will finally save them from death, and rescue them from the grave.

7. *Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.*

This should be the resolution of every Christian king and people, in the day of battle. And, in the spiritual war, in which we are all engaged, the first and necessary step to victory is, to renounce all confidence in the wisdom and strength of nature and the world; and to remember, that we can do nothing, but in the name, by the merits, through the power, and for the sake of Jesus Christ, our LORD, and our GOD.

8. *They are brought down and fallen, but we are risen and stand upright.*

This was eminently the case, when the pride and power of Jewish infidelity and pagan idolatry fell before the victorious sermons and lives of the humble believers in Jesus: this is the case in every conflict with our spiritual enemies, when we engage them in the name, the Spirit, and the power of Christ; and this will be the case at the last day, when the world, with the prince of it, shall be “brought down, and fall; but we, risen” from the dead, through the resurrection of our Lord, shall “stand upright” in the courts of heaven, and sing the praises of him who getteth us all our victories.

9. *Save, LORD, let the king hear us, when we call.*

Thus the Psalm concludes, as it began, with a general “Hosanna” of the church, praying for the prosperity and success of the then future Messiah, and for her own salvation in him, her king; who from the grave and gate of death, was, for this

end, to be exalted to the right hand of the majesty in the heavens, that he might hear, and present to his Father the prayers of his people, “when they call upon him.”

PSALM XXI.

ARGUMENT.

This is one of the proper Psalms which the church hath appointed to be used on Ascension-day, and wherein 1—6. she celebrates the victory of her Redeemer, and the glory consequent thereupon; the prophecies 7. the stability of his kingdom, and 8—12. the destruction of the enemies thereof; concluding with a prayer for his final triumph and exaltation; the celebration of which, with everlasting hallelujahs, will be her employment in heaven.

1. *The king shall joy in thy strength, O LORD, and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!*

The joy of Christ himself, after his victory, is in the strength and salvation of Jehovah, manifested thereby. Such ought to be the joy of his disciples, when God hath enabled them to vanquish their enemies, either temporal or spiritual; in which latter case, as they are called kings, and said to reign with Christ; so they are in duty bound to acknowledge, that they reign by him: “He that glorieth,” whatever the occasion be, “let him glory in the LORD.”

2. *Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips.*

The desire of Christ's heart was his own resurrection and exaltation, for the benefit of his church; and now he ever liveth to make “request with his lips,” for the conversion and salvation of sinners. Such desires will be granted, and such requests will
never

never be withholden. Let us be careful to frame ours, after that all perfect model of divine love.

3. *For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness : thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head.*

The Son of God could not be more ready to ask for the blessings of the divine goodness, than the Father was to give them : and his disposition is the same towards all his adopted sons. Christ, as king and priest, weareth a crown of glory, represented by the purest and most resplendent of metals, gold. He is pleased to esteem his saints, excelling in different virtues, as the rubies, the sapphires, and the emeralds, which grace and adorn that crown. Who would not be ambitious of obtaining a place therein !

4. *He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever.*

The life, asked by Christ, was, not a continuance in this valley of tears, but that new and eternal life, consequent upon a resurrection from the dead. For thus his petition was granted in “length of days for ever and ever. He died no more ; death had no more dominion over him.” Whose disciples then are they, that wish only to have their days prolonged upon the earth, forgetful of the life, which is hid with Christ in God ?

5. *His glory is great in thy salvation, honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him.*

What tongue can express the “glory, honour, and majesty,” with which the King of righteousness and peace was invested, upon his ascension ; when he took possession of the throne prepared for him, and received the homage of heaven and earth ? The sacred imagery in St John’s Revelation sets them before our eyes in such a manner, that no one can read the description, whose heart will not

burn within him, thought impatient desire to behold them. See Rev. ch. iv. vii. xix. xxi. xxii.

6. *For thou hast made him most blessed, Heb. set him to be blessings*, for ever; thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance.*

Christ, by his death and passion, having removed the curse, became the fountain of all blessings to his people, in time and eternity; being himself the Blessing promised to Abraham, and the subject of the patriarchal benedictions. The joy communicated to the humanity of our Lord, from the divine nature, shall be shed abroad on all his saints, when admitted to view the "countenance of God" in the face of Jesus Christ. Then they shall enter into "the joy of their Lord."

7. *For the king trusteth in the LORD, and through the mercy of the most High, he shall not be moved.*

The throne of Christ, as man, was erected and established, by his trust and confidence in the Father, during his humiliation and passion. Faith in God, therefore, is the way that leadeth to honour and stability. "Look at the generations of old, and see: did ever any trust in the Lord, and was confounded?" Ecclus. ii. 10.

8. *Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies; thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee.*

The same right hand of Jehovah is glorious in power to save his people, and to destroy his enemies; to convert the Gentiles, and to crush the Jews; to exalt the faithful to heaven, and cast down the unbelieving to hell: neither is there any treason against the King of heaven, which shall not be dragged forth into the light, made manifest, judged, and

* "Nam posuisti eum in secula benedicendum." Houbigant. Compare Gen. xii. 2. Bish. Lowth, in Merrick's Annotations.

and condemned. Let thy hand, O Lord, be upon our sins, to destroy them; but upon us, to save us.

9. *Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger: the LORD shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them.*

“The time of God’s anger” often begins in this life, especially towards the close of it, when an evil conscience within, like flame confined in an “oven,” torments the sinner, as a prelude to punishments future and unknown, which the “wrath” of God is preparing to inflict on the incorrigible and impenitent. Let us so meditate on this sad scene, that we may have no part in it.

10. *Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men.*

A day is coming, when all the “fruits” of sin, brought forth by sinners, in their words, their writings, and their actions, shall be “destroyed;” yea, the tree itself, which had produced them, shall be rooted up, and cast into the fire. The “seed” and posterity of the wicked, if they continue in the way of their forefathers, will be punished like them. Let parents consider, that upon their principles and practices may depend the salvation or destruction of multitudes after them. The case of the Jews, daily before their eyes, should make them tremble.

11. *For they intended evil against thee; they imagined a mischievous device, which they are not able to perform.*

Vengeance came upon the Jews to the uttermost, because of their intended malice against Christ. They, like Joseph’s brethren, “thought evil against him;” but “they were not able to perform it; for God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.” Gen. 1. 20. So let all the designs of ungodly men against thy church, O Lord, through thy power of bringing
good

good out of evil, turn to her advantage: and let all men be convinced, that no weapon formed against thee can prosper.

12. *Therefore shalt thou make them turn their back, or, thou shalt set them as a butt, when thou shalt make ready thine arrows upon thy strings, against the face of them.*

The judgments of God are called his “arrows,” being sharp, swift, sure, and deadly. What a dreadful situation, to be set as a mark, and “butt,” at which these arrows are directed! View Jerusalem encompassed by the Roman armies without, and torn to pieces by the animosity of desperate and bloody factions within. No farther commentary is requisite upon this verse. “Tremble, and repent,” is the inference to be drawn by every Christian community under heaven, in which appear the symptoms of degeneracy and apostasy.

13. *Be thou exalted, LORD, in thine own strength; so will we sing, and praise thy power.*

The church concludes with a joyful acclamation to her redeemer, wishing for his “exaltation in his own strength,” as God, who was to be abased in much weakness, as man. We still continue to wish and pray for his exaltation over sin, in the hearts of his people by grace, and finally over death, in their bodies, by his glorious power at the resurrection. The triumph over sin we sing in Psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, upon earth; that over death we shall praise with everlasting hallelujahs, in heaven.

IV DAY. EVENING PRAYER. PSALM XXII.

ARGUMENT.

This Psalm, which the church hath appointed to be used on Good Friday, as our Lord uttered the first verse of it, when hanging on the cross, consisteth

sisteth of two parts. The former, 1—21. treateth of the passion; the latter, 22—31. celebrateth the resurrection of Jesus, with its effects. 1, 2. He complaineth of being forsaken; 3—6. acknowledgeth the holiness of the Father, and pleadeth the former deliverances of the church; 6—8. describeth his humiliation, with the taunts and reproaches of the Jews; 9—11. expresseth his faith, and prayeth for help; 12—18. particularizeth his sufferings; 19—21. repeateth his supplications; 22—25, declareth his resolution to praise the Father for his deliverance, and exhorteth his church to do the same; 26—31. prophesieth the conversion of the Gentile world to the faith and worship of the true God.

1. *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?*

Christ, the beloved Son of the Father, when hanging on the cross, complained in these words, that he was deprived, for a time, of the divine presence and comforting influence, while he suffered for our sins. If the Master thus underwent the trial of a spiritual desertion, why doth the disciple think it strange, unless the light of heaven shine continually upon his tabernacle? Let us comfort ourselves, in such circumstances, with the thought, that we are thereby conformed to the image of our dying Lord; that sun, which set in a cloud, to arise without one.

2. *O my God, I cry in the day time, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.*

Even our Lord himself, as man, prayed, “that if it were possible, the cup might pass from him;” but God had ordained otherwise, for his own glory, and for man’s salvation. “Day and night,” in prosperity

prosperity and adversity, living and dying, let us not be "silent," but cry for deliverance; always remembering to add, as Christ did, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." Nor let any man be impatient for the return of his prayers, since every petition preferred even by the Son of God himself was not granted.

3. *But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.**

Whatever befall the members of the church, the head thereof here teacheth them to confess the justice and holiness of God in all his proceedings; and to acknowledge, that whether he exalteth, or humbleth his people, he is to be praised and glorified by them.

4. *Our fathers trusted in thee; they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.*

"Trust" in God is the way to "deliverance;" and the former instances of the divine favour are so many arguments why we should hope for the same; but it may not always be vouchsafed, when we expect it. The patriarchs and Israelites of old were often saved from their enemies: the holy Jesus is left to languish and expire under the malice of his. God knows what is proper for him to do, and for us to suffer; we know neither. This consideration is an anchor for the afflicted soul, sure and steadfast.

5. *They cried unto thee, and were delivered; they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.*

No argument is of more force with God, than that which is founded upon an appeal to his darling attribute of mercy, and to the manifestations of it formerly made to persons in distress; for which
reason

* Or, perhaps, as Bishop Lowth renders it, "Thou that inhabitest תהלות ישראל the irradiations, the glory of Israel." See Merrick's Annotations on the Psalms, p. 43.

reason it is here repeated, and dwelt upon. They who would obtain grace to help, in time of need, must “cry,” as well as “trust.” The “prayer of faith” is mighty with God, and (if we may use the expression) overcometh the Omnipotent.

6. *But I am a worm, and no man : a reproach of men, and despised of the people.*

He who spared all other men, spared not his own Son ; he spared not him, that he might spare them. The Redeemer of the world scrupled not to compare himself, in his state of humiliation, to the lowest reptile which his own hand formed, a “worm,” humble, silent, innocent, overlooked, oppressed, and trodden under foot. Let the sight of this reptile teach us humility.

7, 8. *All they that see me, laugh me to scorn ; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the LORD, that he would deliver him : let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.*

This was literally fulfilled, when Messiah hung upon the cross, and the priests and elders used the very words that had been put into their mouths, by the Spirit of prophecy, so long before. Matt. xxvii. 41—43. “The chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He trusted in God ; let him deliver him now, if he will have him.” O the wisdom and foreknowledge of God ! The infatuation and blindness of man ! The same are too often the sentiments of those, who live in times, when the church and her righteous cause, with their advocates, are under the cloud of persecution, and seem to sink beneath the displeasure of the powers of the world. But such do not believe, or do not consider, that, in the Christian economy, death is followed by a resurrection, when it will appear

pear, that God forsaketh not them that are his, but they are preserved for ever.

9, 10. *But thou art he that took me out of the womb; thou didst make me hope, when I was upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly.*

This was eminently the case of Christ, who was the Son of God in a sense, in which no other man ever was. But in him we are all children of God by adoption: we are all in the hands of a gracious providence from the womb; and into those hands must we commend ourselves, when about to depart hence. To whom else, then, should we have recourse, for support and consolation, in the day of calamity and sorrow?

11. *Be not far from me, for trouble is near; for there is none to help.*

From the foregoing considerations, namely, from the holiness of God, ver. 3. from the salvation vouchsafed to the people of old time, ver. 4, 5. from the low estate to which Messiah was reduced, ver. 6, 7, 8. and from the watchful care of the Father over him, since his miraculous birth; ver. 9, 10. from all these considerations, he enforceth his petition for help, during his unparalleled sufferings, when "all forsook him, and fled." Let us treasure up these things in our hearts, against the hour when "trouble shall be near, and there shall be none to help;" when all shall forsake us, but God, our conscience, and our prayers.

12, 13. *Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.*

From the 11th verse to the 19th, the sufferings of the holy Jesus are described, in terms partly figurative, and partly literal. A lamb, in the midst
of

of wild “bulls and lions,” is a very lively representation of his meekness and innocence, and of the noise and fury of his implacable enemies. “Bashan” was a fertile country, Numb. xxxii. 4. and the cattle there fed were fat and “strong.” Deut. xxxii. 14. Like them, the Jews, in that good land, “waxed fat and kicked,” grew proud and rebelled; “forsook God that made them, and lightly esteemed the rock of their salvation.” Let both communities and individuals, when blessed with peace, plenty, and prosperity in the world, take sometimes into consideration this flagrant instance of their being abused; with the final consequence of such abuse.

14, 15. *I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint, or, sundered; my heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.*

For our sakes, Christ yielded himself, like “water,” without resistance, to the violence of his enemies; suffering his “bones,” in which consisteth the strength of the frame, to be distended and dislocated upon the cross; while, by reason of the fire from above, to the burning heat of which this paschal Lamb was exposed, his heart dissolved and melted away. The intenseness of his passion, drying up all the fluids, brought on a thirst, tormenting beyond expression; and, at last, laid him low in the grave. Never, blessed Lord, was love like unto thy love! Never was sorrow like unto thy sorrow! Thy spouse and body mystical, the church, is often, in a degree, conformed unto thee; and as thou wert, so is she in this world.

16. *For dogs have compassed me, the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me; they pierced my hands and my feet.*

Our Lord, who compared himself above, ver. 12. to a lamb in the midst of bulls and lions, here setteth himself forth again under the image of an hart, or hind, roused early in the morning of his mortal life, hunted and chafed all the day, and in the evening pulled down to the ground, by those who “compassed” and “inclosed” him, thirsting and clamouring for his blood, crying, “Away with him, away with him, crucify him, crucify him.” And the next step was, the “piercing his hands and his feet,” by nailing them to the cross. How often, O thou preserver of men, in thy church, thy ministers, and thy word, art thou thus compassed, and thus pierced!

17. *I may tell all my bones : they look and stare upon me.*

The skin and flesh were distended, by the posture of the body on the cross, that the bones, as through a thin veil, became visible, and might be counted; * and the holy Jesus, forsaken and stript, naked and bleeding, was a spectacle to heaven and earth. Look unto him, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the world!

18. *They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.*

“The soldiers, when they had crucified JESUS, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part, and also his coat; now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the Scripture might be fulfilled, which saith—They parted

* “Qui macilenti sunt, sic habent ossa prominentia, ut facile omnia possint tactu secerni et numerari. David, quatenus hæc ei convenient, dicere hoc potuit de se fuga et molestiis emaciato. Sed Christus aptius ita loqui poterat, quod magis emaciatus esset, et corpore nudo atque in cruce distento, magis adparerent ossa.”
Le Clerc, cited by Bishop Lowth, in Merrick's Annotations.

parted my garments among them, and for my vesture they cast lots." John xix. 23, 24.

19. *But be not thou far from me, O LORD; O my strength, haste thee to help me.*

The circumstances of the passion being thus related, Christ resumes the prayer, with which the Psalm begins, and which is repeated ver. 10, 11. The adversary had emptied his quiver, and spent all the venom of his malice; Messiah therefore prayeth for a manifestation of the power and favour of heaven on his side, in a joyful and glorious resurrection. And to a resurrection from the dead every man will find it necessary to look forward, for comfort.

20, 21. *Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling* from the power of the dog. Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me, or, and hear thou me from the horns of the unicorns.*

The wrath of God was the "sword," which took vengeance on all men, in their representative; it was the "flaming sword," which kept man out of paradise; the sword, to which it was said, at the time of the passion—"Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." Zech. xiii. 7. Matt. xxvi. 31. The ravening fury of the "dog," the "lion," and the "unicorn," or "oryx," a fierce and untameable creature of the stag kind, is made use of to describe the rage of the devil and his instruments, whether spiritual or corporeal. From all these Christ supplicates the Father for deliverance. How great need have we to supplicate for the same, through him!

P 2

22. I

* Heb. *יְהוּדָיִי* my united one. "May it relate to any thing more than נפש? The human nature united with the Divinity in the person of Christ? Quære." Bishop Lowth, in Merrick's Annotations.

22. *I will declare thy name unto my brethren ; in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.*

The former part of the Psalm we have seen to be prophetic of the passion. The strain now changes to an epinikion, or hymn of triumph, in the mouth of the Redeemer, celebrating his victory, and its happy consequences. This verse is cited by the Apostle, Heb. ii. 11. "Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one : for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, &c." And accordingly, when the deliverance, so long wished, and so earnestly prayed for, was accomplished by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, he "declared the name of God," by his Apostles, to all his "brethren;" and caused the church to resound with incessant praises and hallelujahs ; all which are here represented as proceeding from the body, by and through him who is the head of that body.

23. * *Ye that fear the LORD, praise him ; all ye the seed of Jacob glorify him ; and fear him all ye seed of Israel.*

If Christ arose from the dead, to declare salvation to his brethren, and to glorify God for the same, how diligent ought we to be in doing the former ; how delighted, in the performance of the latter ! Messiah first addresseth himself to his ancient people, "the seed of Jacob," to whom the Gospel was first preached. How long, O Lord, holy and true, shall thy once highly favoured nation continue deaf to this gracious call of thine ;
" All

* Bishop Lowth is of opinion, that this verse and the following are the "song" of praise, which, in the verse preceding, the speaker says, he will utter "in the congregation." The introduction of it, as his Lordship justly observes, gives a variety to the whole, and is highly poetical. Merrick's Annotations.

“All ye seed of Jacob glorify him; and fear him all ye seed of Israel.”

24. *For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted: neither hath he hid his face from him, but when he cried unto him, he heard.*

The great subjects of praise and thanksgiving, in the church, are the sufferings of the lowly and afflicted Jesus, and the acceptance of those sufferings by the Father, as a propitiation for the sins of the world; which acceptance was testified by raising him from the dead; inasmuch as the discharge of the surety proved the payment of the debt. The poor and afflicted brethren of Christ may take comfort from this verse; for if they suffer in his spirit, they will be raised in his glory.

25. *My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him.*

The vow of Christ, was, to build and consecrate to Jehovah a spiritual temple, in which the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise should be continually offered. This vow he performed, after his resurrection, by the hands of his Apostles, and still continueth to perform, by those of his ministers, carrying on the work of edification in “the great congregation” of the Gentile Christian Church. The vows of Christ cannot fail of being performed. Happy are they, whom he vouchsafeth to use, as his instruments, in the performance of them.

26. *The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek him; your heart shall live for ever.*

A spiritual banquet is prepared in the church for the meek and lowly of heart; the bread of life and the wine of salvation are set forth in the word and sacraments; and they, that hunger and thirst after righteousness, shall be “satisfied therewith: they,

“who seek” the Lord Jesus in his ordinances, ever find reason to “praise him;” while, nourished by these noble and heavenly viands, they live the life, and work the works of grace, proceeding still forward to glory; when their “heart shall live for ever,” in heaven.

27. *All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the LORD; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.*

The great truths of man’s creation and fall, with the promise of a Redeemer to come, were “forgotten” by the nations, after their apostasy from the true God, and the one true religion; but were, as we may say, recalled to their “remembrance” by the sermons of the Apostles, and the writings of Moses and the Prophets, translated, and spread among them. By these they were converted to the faith, and now compose the holy church universal throughout the world; being the glorious proofs and fruits of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

28. *For the kingdom is the LORD’s; and he is the governor among the nations.*

There is good reason why the nations should worship Christ, and throw away their idols; since in his hands, not in their’s, is the government of the world. Upon his ascension he was crowned King of kings, and Lord of lords; he ruleth in the church by his Spirit; and blessed are the hearts, that are his willing subjects, in the day of his power.

29. *All they that be fat upon the earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him, and none can keep alive his own soul.*

It was said above, ver. 26. “the meek,” the poor and lowly, “shall eat and be satisfied.” It is here foretold, that the “fat ones of the earth,” the great, the opulent, the flourishing, the nobles and
princes

princes of the world, should be called in to partake of the feast, and to “worship” God. Rich, as well as poor, are invited*; and the hour is coming, when all the race of Adam, as many as sleep in the “dust” of the earth, unable to raise themselves from thence, quickened and called forth by the voice of the Son of man, must “bow” the knee to king Messiah.

30. *A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the LORD for a generation.*

The Apostle informeth us, Rom. ix. 8. that “the children of the promise are counted for the seed;” that is, the converts to be made, among the nations, by the preaching of the Gospel, according to the promise to Abraham; these were to constitute the church and family of Christ, the “generation” of the faithful; these were to take the place, and enjoy the privileges of the Jews, cut off because of their unbelief. Lord, enable us to serve thee all our lives with a service acceptable to thee in Christ Jesus; that at the resurrection of the just, we may be numbered in the generation of thy children.

31. *They*

* They are “invited,” but they do not so often accept the invitation. And it must be owned, that דשני ארץ are generally mentioned in an unfavourable sense. Bishop Lowth is therefore rather inclined to construe the words, as Mr Fenwick does; all who are “fattened,” that is, “fed” and “sustained by the earth.” The expression then intimates the universality of the Gospel, which, the Apostle says, “was preached to EVERY CREATURE;” a phrase of similar import. All who would partake the benefits of Christ’s passion, must worship him as a Saviour, before they are called upon, to adore him as a Judge. The Bishop thinks, likewise, that the 29th verse should end with the words “bow before him;” that the next words, in the original, should be read, as almost all the ancient versions seem to have read them, רנפשי לר דזיה and rendered—“But my soul shall live—My seed shall serve him; &c.”

31. *They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this.*

The promised and expected race shall spring forth, at the time appointed, and proclaim the “righteousness,” which is of God by faith, to ages and generations yet unborn; who, hearing of that great work, which the Lord shall have wrought, for the salvation of men, will thereby be led to glorify him in the church, for the same, to the end of time.

Rise, crown'd with light, imperial Salem rise!
 Exalt thy tow'ring head, and lift thy eyes!
 See a long race thy spacious courts adorn;
 See future sons, and daughters yet unborn,
 In crowding ranks, on ev'ry side arise,
 Demanding life, impatient for the skies!
 See barb'rous nations at thy gates attend,
 Walk in thy light, and in thy temple bend.

MESSIAH.

PSALM XXIII.

ARGUMENT.

In this Psalm, the “sheep of God's pasture” address themselves to their great and good SHEPHERD, declaring, 1. their acquiescence and confidence in him: 2. his diligence in feeding them with the food of eternal life; 3. his watchful care in bringing them back from the ways of error, and conducting them in the path of truth: 4. his power in saving them from death; 5. his loving-kindness in vouchsafing his spiritual comforts, during their pilgrimage in an enemy's country: and 6. they express their hope and trust, that a continuation of that loving-kindness will enable them to pass, through the vanities

ties and vexations of time, to the blissful glories of eternity.

1. *The LORD is my Shepherd, I shall not want.*

In these words, which one cannot utter, without feeling the happiness they were intended to describe, the believer is taught to express his absolute acquiescence and complacency in the guardian care of the great Pastor of the universe; the Redeemer, and Preserver of men. With joy he reflects, that he has a "Shepherd;" and that that Shepherd is JEHOVAH; one possessed of all the qualities requisite to constitute the pastoral character, in the highest perfection. For where shall we ever find such unexampled diligence, such inexpressible tenderness, such exquisite skill, such all-subduing might, and such unwearied patience? Why should they fear, who have such a friend? How can they "want," who have such a "Shepherd?" Behold us, O Lord Jesus, in ourselves, hungry, and thirsty, and feeble, and diseased, and defenceless, and lost. O feed us, and cherish us, and heal us, and defend us, and bear with us, and restore us.

2. *He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters.*

The loveliest image afforded by the natural world is here represented to the imagination; that of a flock, feeding in verdant meadows, and reposing, in quietness, by the rivers of water, running gently through them. It is selected, to convey an idea of the provision made, for the souls, as well as bodies of men, by His goodness, who "openeth his hand, and filleth all things living with plenteousness. By me," saith the Redeemer, "if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." John x. 9. And what saith the Spirit of peace and comfort? "Let him that is a thirst come;

come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Rev. xxii. 17. Every flock, that we see, should remind us of our necessities; and every pasture should excite us to praise that love, by which they are so bountifully supplied.

3. *He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, for his name's sake.*

To "restore," or bring back those that had "gone astray," that is, in other words, to "call sinners to repentance," was the employment of Him, who, in the parable of the "lost sheep," representeth himself as executing that part of the pastoral office. By the same kind hand, when "restored," they are thenceforward led in "the path of righteousness;" in the way of holy obedience. Obstructions are removed; they are strengthened, to walk, and run, in the path of God's commandments; while, to invite and allure them, a crown of glory appears, held forth, at the end of it. All this is now done, for, in, by, and through that "name," beside which, there is none under heaven given unto man, whereby he may be saved.

4. *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*

The sheep here express their confidence in the power of their Shepherd, as sufficient to defend them against the last and most formidable enemy, death himself. To apprehend the scenery in this verse, we must conceive the church militant and the church triumphant, as two mountains, between which lieth the "valley of the shadow of death," necessary to be passed by those, who would go from one to the other. Over all that region of dreariness and desolation, extendeth the empire of the king of terrors: and the believer alone "feareth

no evil," in his passage through it; because he is conducted by "that great Shepherd of the sheep, whom God brought again from the dead;" Heb. xii. 20. and who can therefore shew us the path of life, through the vale of death. In all our dangers and distresses, but chiefly in our last and greatest need, let "thy rod," the sceptre of thy kingdom, O Lord, protect us, and thy pastoral "staff" guide and support our steps; till, through the dreaded valley, we pass to the heavenly mountain, on which St John saw "the Lamb standing, with a great multitude redeemed from the earth." Rev. xiv. 1.

5. *Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.*

Another set of images, borrowed from a "feast," is introduced, to give us ideas of those cordials and comforts, prepared to cheer and invigorate the fainting soul; while, surrounded by "enemies," it is accomplishing its pilgrimage through life; during which time, its sorrows and afflictions are alleviated and sweetened, by the joys and consolations of the Holy One; by the feast of a good conscience; by the bread of life, the "oil" of gladness, and the "cup" of salvation, still full, and "running over."

6. *Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.*

Experience of "goodness and mercy," already so often vouchsafed, begets an assurance of their being continued to the end; for nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, if we do not separate ourselves from it. Thus will the Lord our Saviour provide for us on earth, and conduct us to heaven; where we shall dwell to "length of days," even the days of eternity, "in one fold under one

one Shepherd :” a fold, into which no enemy enters, and from which no friend departs : where we shall rest from all our labours, and see a period to all our sorrows ; where the voice of praise and thanksgiving is heard continually ; where all the faithful, from Adam to his last born son, shall meet together, to behold the face of Jesus, and to be blessed with the vision of the Almighty : where “ we shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on us, nor any heat. But the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed us, and lead us to living fountains of waters.” Rev. vii. 16, 17.

V. DAY. MORNING PRAYER. PSALM XXIV.

ARGUMENT.

The plan of this Psalm, according to the letter of it, is beautifully delineated by Bishop Lowth, in his xxvii. lecture. The Ark of God is supposed to be moving, in a grand and solemn procession of the whole Israelitish nation, towards the place of its future residence, on mount Sion. See 1 Chron. xv. On ascending the mountain, the Psalm is sung, declaring 1, 2. the sovereignty of Jehovah over all the earth ; describing 3—6. what the character ought to be of that people, whom he had more peculiarly selected, to serve him, in the house where his Glory was to dwell, and of which 7—10. it was now about to take possession. All this is by us to be applied to the Christian church, and the ascension of our Lord into heaven ; for which reason, the Psalm is one of those appointed to be used on Ascension day.

1. *The earth is the LORD's and the fulness thereof ; the world, and they that dwell therein.*

The

The God of Israel was Lord of the whole earth, by right of creation. The same divine person, who created the world, hath since, in Christ, redeemed it; and it is his again, by that right also. But the church Christian is his, in a more peculiar manner, as the church of Israel formerly was. We are doubly bound to adore and to obey him. "It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves;" Ps. c. 2. and "we are not our own, being bought with a price." 1 Cor. vi. 20. The inference is, "Let us glorify God in our bodies, and in our spirits, which are," every way, "God's."

2. *For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.*

The waters, which, at the creation, and again at the deluge, overspread all things, being, by the power of God, driven down into the great deep, and there confined, the earth was, in a wonderful manner, constructed and established, as a circular arch, upon, or over them. Let us often meditate on this noble subject for contemplation and devotion; that we may learn, whither we are to have recourse, when in danger of being overwhelmed by sins or sorrows.

3. *Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? and who shall stand in his holy place?*

The connection seems to be this. If the Almighty Creator and Lord of all the earth has chosen us to be his peculiar people, to serve and worship him in his temple, upon the holy hill of Sion, whither the sacred symbol of his presence is now ascending, what manner of persons ought we to be? The reasoning is exactly the same, as Bishop Lowth observes, with that of Moses, in Deut. x. 14—16. "Behold the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's thy God; the earth also, with

all that therein is. Only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers, to love them; and he chose their seed after them, even you, above all people, as it is this day. Circumcise therefore, the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked." The argument applies, with additional force, to ourselves, as Christians. We compose a far more numerous and magnificent procession than that of the Israelites, when the church universal, with her spiritual services, attends our Lord, as it were, upon his ascension, in heart and mind ascending, with him, into the holy places, not made with hands.

4. *He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lift up his soul unto vanity, or, placed his trust in vain idols, or, in the creature, nor sworn deceitfully.* 5. *He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.*

No man can ascend into heaven, through his own righteousness, but he who came down from heaven, and performed a perfect sinless obedience to the will of God. Sinners of old were purified, through faith in him that was to come, by typical offerings and ablutions, before they approached the sanctuary. We have been cleansed from our sins, and renewed unto holiness, by the blood of Christ, and the washing of the holy Ghost. Thus we become his people: thus we "receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of our salvation."

6. *This is the generation of them that seek him; that seek thy face, O Jacob, or, O God of Jacob.*

Such ought the people to be, who seek the presence of God, and approach to worship him in the sanctuary; who celebrate the ascension of their Redeemer, and hope, one day, to follow him into those happy mansions, which he is gone before to prepare for them.

7. *Lift*

7. *Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in.* 8. *Who is the King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.* 9, 10. The chorus is repeated.

We must now form to ourselves an idea of the Lord of glory, after his resurrection from the dead, making his entry into the eternal temple in heaven; as of old, by the symbol of his presence, he took possession of that figurative and temporary structure, which once stood upon the hill of Sion. We are to conceive him gradually rising, from mount Olivet, into the air, taking the clouds for his chariot, and ascending up on high; while some of the angels, like the Levites in procession, attendant on the triumphant Messiah, in the day of his power, demand, that those everlasting gates and doors, hitherto shut and barred against the race of Adam, should be thrown open, for his admission into the realms of bliss. “Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in.” On hearing this voice of jubilee and exultation from the earth, the abode of misery and sorrow, the rest of the angels, astonished at the thought of a MAN claiming a right of entrance into their happy regions, ask, from within, like the Levites in the temple, “Who is this King of glory?” To which answer the attendant angels answer, in a strain of joy and triumph—and let the church of the redeemed answer with them—“The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle;” the LORD JESUS victorious over sin, death, and hell. Therefore we say, and with holy transport we repeat it; “Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in.”

in." And if any ask, "Who is the King of glory?" To heaven and earth we proclaim aloud—"The LORD of hosts," all-conquering MESSIAH, head over every creature, the leader of the armies of JEHOVAH, "He is the King of glory." Even so, Glory be to thee, O Lord most High! Amen. Hallelujah.

PSALM XXV.

ARGUMENT.

It is much the same, whether we suppose the church, or any single member thereof, to be speaking throughout this Psalm, and praying, 1—3. for help and protection against spiritual enemies; 4. 5. for knowledge and direction in the way of godliness; pleading for this purpose, 6, 7. God's mercies of old; 8. the perfections of his nature; 9, 10. enumerating the qualifications requisite for scholars in the divine school; 11. upon the strength of these arguments, enforcing the petition for mercy; 12—14. describing the blessedness of the man who feareth the Lord; 15—21. preferring divers petitions; and 22. closing one for the final redemption of the Israel of God.

1. *Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul.* 2. *O my God, I trust in thee; let me not be ashamed; let not mine enemies triumph over me.*

Cares and pleasures are the weights which press the soul down to earth, and fasten her thereto; and it is the spirit of prayer, which must enable her to throw off these weights, to break these cords, and to "lift up" herself to heaven. He who "trusteth" in any thing, but in God, will one day be "ashamed" and confounded, and give his spiritual "enemies" cause to "triumph over him."

2. *Yea*

3. *Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed; let them be ashamed, which transgress without a cause, or, vainly, rashly.*

God, as a father and a master, will never suffer his children and servants to want his favour and protection; nor will he permit malicious rebels to enjoy it. Honour will, in the end, be the portion of the former, and shame the inheritance of the latter.

4. *Shew me thy ways, O LORD, teach me thy paths.*

5. *Lead me in thy truth, and teach me; for thou art the God of my salvation, on thee do I wait all the day.*

We are travellers to heaven, who, through temptation, are often drawn aside, and lose our way. The way is the law of God; and, to keep that law, is to walk in the way. God only can put us in the way, and preserve and forward us therein; for which purpose, we must continue instant in prayer to "the God of our salvation," that he would "teach" us to do his will; that so we may not be ashamed and confounded.

6. *Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies, and thy loving-kindnesses: for they have been ever of old.*

The soul, when hard beset with sins and sorrows, is apt to think, that God hath forsaken and forgotten her. In this case, she cannot more effectually prevail upon him, or comfort herself, than by recollecting, and, as it were, reminding him of former mercies; since, however the dispositions and affections of men may alter, God is always the same.

7. *Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions; according to thy mercy remember thou me, for thy goodness' sake, O LORD.*

When God remembers his mercy, he forgets our sins; and when he forgets our sins, he remembers his mercy; for what else is his mercy, but the forgive-

ness, the blotting out, the non-imputation of sin? Who, that has lived long in the world, can survey the time past of his life, without breaking forth into this petition, adding, to “the sins of his youth,” the many transgressions of his riper years?

8. *Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way.*

Another argument for hope and trust in God, is drawn from his “nature.” He hates sin, and loves righteousness; he sent his Son to suffer for the one, and his Spirit to produce the other; and he cannot but be faithful and just to his own gracious promises, which all centre in the salvation of sinners by pardon and grace, through Him, who is “the way, the truth, and the life.”

9. *The meek will he guide in judgement; and the meek will he teach his way.*

Pride and anger have no place in the school of Christ. The Master himself is “meek and lowly of heart;” much more, surely, ought the scholars to be so. He, who hath no sense of his ignorance, can have no desire, or capability of knowledge, human or divine.

10. *All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth, unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.*

The law of God is the way by which he cometh to us as well as that by which we go to him; and all the different dispensations of that law, here styled the paths of the Lord, are composed of “mercy and truth;” mercy promising, and truth performing meet together in Christ, who is “the end of the law to every one that believeth;” to such as “keep his covenant and his testimonies.”

11. *For thy name's sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great.*

The pardon of sin is to be asked, and obtained, through that gracious “name,” in which “mercy
and

and truth are met together ;” and so “ great is our sin, that pardon can be had only through that name.

12. *What man is he that feareth the LORD? Him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose.*

The blessings consequent upon “ the fear of the Lord,” are such, as will fully justify the earnestness and fervour of the foregoing petitions for pardon and grace. “ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” He who hath it, will “ choose” the right way, and will be “ taught” to go therein.

13. *His soul shall dwell at ease, Heb. lodge in goodness : and his seed shall inherit the earth.*

It is a privilege of “ the man who feareth the Lord,” that, not only in this present life, all things work together for his “ good,” but his soul, after having persevered in righteousness, shall take up its abode in the mansions of felicity. His “ seed” likewise shall be blessed in the same manner, with such a portion of the temporal promise made to Abraham, as God seeth best for them, and certainly with an abundant share in the spiritual inheritance, the NEW earth, wherein dwell righteousness, joy, and glory. “ Blessed are the meek,” the seed of Christ, “ for they shall inherit the earth.” Matt. v. 5.

14. *The secret, Heb. fixed counsel, or, design of the LORD is with them that fear him ; and he will shew them his covenant. Heb. and his covenant to make them know it.*

The greatest happiness of man in this world is, to know the fixed and determinate counsels of God concerning the human race, and to understand the covenant of redemption. This likewise is the reward of “ the fear of the Lord,” which humbles the soul, and prepares it for divine illumination, causing it to place all its comfort in meditation on
the

the wonders of heavenly love. "All things which I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you," saith our Lord to his disciples. John. xi. 15.

15. *Mine eyes are ever towards the LORD: for he shall pluck my feet out of the net.*

Encouraged to hope for the blessings above mentioned, the lowly suppliant still continues to fix the eyes of his understanding on their proper object, God his Saviour, beholding his glory, attending to his will, and expecting his mercy. An unfortunate dove, whose feet are taken in the snare of the fowler, is a fine emblem of the soul, intangled in the cares or pleasures of the world; from which she desires, through the power of grace, to fly away, and to be at rest, with her glorified Redeemer.

16. *Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and afflicted.*

They who are ever looking unto the Lord, will be heard, when they beseech him to turn his face, and to look upon them. When the soul forsaking and forsaken by all earthly supports and comforts, finds herself in a state of desolation, and is experimentally convinced of her being, not in a paradise of delights, but in a vale of misery, then her visitation and deliverance are at hand.

17. *The troubles of my heart are enlarged; O bring thou me out of my distresses.*

As life is prolonged, troubles are generally enlarged, * till at length they take up what room there is in the heart. The last scene of the tragedy is the most calamitous. So it was in the life of our dear Master. And every man will sooner or later perceive

* Bishop Lowth, with some slight alteration of the text, thinks the rendering should be,

Coarctationes cordis mei dilata;

Et ex angustiis meis educ me.

See Merrick's Annotations.

perceive, that God alone can “bring him out of his distresses.”

18. *Look upon mine affliction and my pain, and forgive all my sins.*

Affliction and pain, whether of mind or body, are the fruits of sin; and the pardon of sin is the first step towards the removal of sorrow. The latter is sent to beget in us a due sense of the former, in order to a deliverance from both. In the new earth “dwelleth righteousness;” and, for that reason, “there is no more sorrow, pain, nor crying.” 2 Pet. iii. 13. Rev. xxi. 4.

19. *Consider mine enemies, for they are many; and they hate me with cruel hatred.*

As the evils we suffer are great, so the enemies we have to encounter are many. Their name is legion:” and to their envy, hatred, and malice, there are no bounds. How unequal the combat, unless thou, O God, goest forth with us by thy grace, “conquering and to conquer!”

20. *O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed, for I put my trust in thee.*

Preservation from sin, and deliverance from death, are two great gifts of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. For the latter clause, see ver. 2.

21. *Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I wait on thee.*

How many wishes do our hearts send forth after riches, honours, and pleasures; how few after “integrity and uprightness:” yet these can “preserve” us, and those cannot. Absolute integrity and uprightness are the prerogatives of the king of righteousness; and it is his grace which makes us such as his mercy will accept. On him therefore let us “wait.”

22. *Redeem*

22. *Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.*

In the common salvation all have an interest; and, for that reason, all should pray for it. The earthly David petitioned for Israel; the heavenly David ever continueth to intercede for the church; and every Christian ought to become a suppliant for his brethren, still looking and longing for that glorious day, when, by a joyful resurrection unto life eternal, God shall indeed “redeem Israel out of all his troubles.”

P S A L M XXVI.

ARGUMENT.

The party speaking in this Psalm, whether we suppose it to be the typical, or the true David, the church, or any member thereof, lying under the false accusations of calumny, 1, 2, 3. appealeth to God in behalf of injured innocence; 4, 5. disclaimeth all connection with wicked men; 6, 7, 8. declareth a fixed resolution to adhere to the worship of God, in the church; 9, 10, prayeth to be delivered from the ungodly; 11. again protesteth integrity, and 12. determineth to praise the Lord.

1. *Judge me, O LORD, for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in the LORD; therefore I shall not slide.*

We have here an appeal to God, in behalf of injured and calumniated innocence. This was the case of David, with regard to the accusations of Saul; of Christ, with regard to those of the Jews; and it is often the case of the church, and of good men in the world; for whose use, this Psalm seems peculiarly calculated.

2. *Examine me, O LORD, and prove me: try my reins and my heart.*

A trial of this sort might be desired by David, and may be desired by men, like him, conscious of their integrity, as to the particular crimes charged upon them by the malice of their enemies. Christ alone could ask such a trial at large, as being equally free from every kind and degree of sin, and certain of receiving additional lustre from the increasing heat of the furnace.

3. *For thy loving kindness is before mine eyes ; and I have walked in thy truth.*

They who study, in order to copy, the “loving kindness” and the “truth” of God, may have confidence towards him, whose “truth” will not suffer him to be false to the promises, which his “loving kindness” prompted him to make.

4. *I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers.* 5. *I have hated the congregation of evil doers ; and will not sit with the wicked.*

David, driven by Saul into a land of aliens, yet preserved himself from the contagion of idolatry. And happy the Christian, who can say, that, during the time of his banishment and pilgrimage, he hath escaped the pollutions that are in the world, namely, vanity and hypocrisy, evil practices, and wicked principles. Christ alone, like his emblem the light, passed through all things undefiled.

6. *I will wash mine hands in innocency ; so will I compass thine altar O LORD ;* 7. *That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wonderful works.*

Instead of consorting with the heathen, David comforts himself with the future prospect of restoration to Jerusalem ; of attending the service of God in the tabernacle ; of performing the legal ablutions, in token of innocency thereby signified ; and of singing, before the holy altar, Psalms of praise for his deliverance. The believing soul, in like manner,
may

may find perpetual consolation, while she looks forward toward her return home, from her exile in the world, to the Jerusalem above; her access to the fountain of life and purity; her employment of serving God in the eternal temple, and chanting forth, with angels and archangels, the new songs of the celestial Sion, for so great salvation.

8. LORD, *I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth.* Heb. *the place of the tabernacle of thy glory.*

With what ardent affection the banished prophet sighs for the beauty of holiness in the church, the most amiable object on earth, because the nearest resemblance of heaven, where is the true “habitation of God’s house, and the place of the tabernacle of his glory;” since of the heavenly Jerusalem St John tells us, that the “Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple.” Rev. xxi. 22.

9. *Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men;* 10. *In whose hand is mischief, and their right hand is full of bribes.*

In consideration of his integrity and piety, David beseeches God not to deliver him over into the hands of his unjust and bloody enemies, nor to reckon him in their number. Let our lot, O Lord, be among thy children here, that it may be among them hereafter.

11. *But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto me.*

The Christian’s resolution, like that of the prophet, must be, to hold fast his “integrity” in the midst of his enemies, and not follow a multitude to do evil; as knowing, that the day of final “redemption and mercy” will come.

12. *My foot standeth in an even place; in the congregations will I bless the LORD.*

The

The law of God is that “even place,” that plain and direct path, in which the affections, which are the “feet” of the soul, must be immoveably fixed, so that nothing may induce her to swerve from the stability of her purpose, to the right hand, or to the left. David, upon his return to his country, “blessed the Lord in the congregation” of Israel, by singing Psalms of praise and thanksgiving; and by the constant use of those very Psalms, the Lord is daily “blessed” in all Christian “congregations” throughout the world; yea, and he shall be so blessed, to the end of time.

V. DAY. EVENING PRAYER. PSALM XXVII.

ARGUMENT.

This Psalm containeth, 1—3. a declaration of trust and confidence in Jehovah, amidst the dangers and tumults of war; 4. a longing desire of restoration to the city and house of God: 5, 6. a triumphant assurance of final victory and exaltation; 7—12. earnest prayer for support and protection; 13. a profession of faith, and its mighty power and comfort in affliction; 14. an exhortation to patience.

1. *The LORD is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?*

God is our “light,” as he sheweth us the state we are in, and the enemies we have to encounter; he is our “strength,” as he enableth us, by his grace, to cope with, and overcome them; and he is our “salvation,” as the author and finisher of our deliverance from sin, death, and Satan. All this he was to the blessed person, whom David represented; and all this he will be to his faithful servants.

“If God” therefore “be for us, who can be against us?” Rom. viii. 31.

2. *When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes came upon me, to eat my flesh, they stumbled and fell.*

The past time is often used, in the prophetic language, to intimate the certainty of the future. Faith sees the foe already vanquished, and the prey snatched from the jaws of the devouring lion.

3. *Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.*

What avails it, that the “host” of darkness is in arms, and the world taking the field against us, when the LORD is our light, and heaven our ally?

4. *One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.*

The victories of David ended in his restoration to Jerusalem, and the service of God: the victories of Christ terminated in his triumphant return to a better Jerusalem; and this ought to be the “one thing desired” by the Christian, that after his conquest over the body of sin, he may pass the unnumbered days of eternity in the courts of heaven, contemplating the beauty and the glory of his Redeemer.

5. *For in the time of trouble, he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me, he shall set me upon a rock.*

The protection and consolation, experienced by believers in the church militant, give them a taste of the loving kindness of the Lord, and make them impatiently desirous of quenching their thirst at the fountain of divine pleasures, after they shall have been

been exalted upon the ROCK of ages, from whence that fountain flows.

6. *And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me : therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy, I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.*

These words, as they are supposed to be spoken by David, by Christ, or by the church, express their respective assurances, through faith, of final victory over their several enemies, with their determined resolution of singing hallelujahs to Jehovah, for the same.

7. *Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice : have mercy also upon me, and answer me.*

From the assurances of faith it is always good to descend to the humiliation of prayer to God, who alone can grant unto us that one thing which we desire, and long after, while in the land of our captivity, and house of our pilgrimage. See ver. 4.

8. *When thou saidest, seek ye my face : my heart said unto thee, thy face, LORD, will I seek.*

The voice of God throughout the Scriptures, exhorteth the believer to turn away from the delusive appearances of the creature, and to seek after Him, who is "altogether lovely," until he behold "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." To this voice the believer answers, like a well tuned instrument to the master's touch, declaring his resolution so to do.

9. *Hide not thy face far from me, put not thy servant away in anger : thou hast been my help, leave me not, neither forsake me, O GOD of my salvation.*

The suppliant, having determined to seek the face of God, here prayeth, that he would permit himself to be found, and to be seen; and that he would not, by "hiding his face," cause the light of

knowledge to become darkness, and the fire of charity to go out. The church dreadeth nothing so much, as an eclipse of the "sun of righteousness."

10. *When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up.*

A time will come, when the dearest earthly friends and relations can no longer be of any assistance to us.* The case of the church and of the soul is often-times compared to that of a poor, helpless, exposed orphan. Where worldly comforts end, heavenly ones begin. See Isai. xlix. 15. Matt. xxiii. 37. John ix. 35.

11. *Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies.*

The child of God, learning to walk in the law of his heavenly Father, prayeth to be directed and strengthened from above, that the enemy may neither pervert his steps, nor triumph in his fall.

12. *Deliver me not over into the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty.*

David had his enemies, and false accusers; Christ also had his; and every child of God hath need to petition for deliverance from the great enemy of his salvation, the grand accuser of the brethren, who is ever breathing out malice and cruelty against the body and members of Christ.

13. *I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.*

"Faith" in the comfortable promises of God is the only sovereign cordial for a "fainting" spirit. Earth is the land of the dying; we must extend our prospect into heaven, which is the land of the "living,"

* As there seems to be some difficulty in supposing the Psalmist's parents to have "deserted" him, they might perhaps be said to have "forsaken" him (as Muis conjectures) that is, to have left him behind them as being dead. MERRICK.

“living,” where the faithful shall “see,” and experience evermore, “the goodness of the LORD.”

14. *Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.*

The person speaking concludes with an apostrophe to his own soul, resulting from the confidence in God, expressed, ver. 1. from the desire and the hope of heaven, 4—13. and from the manifold pledges of the divine love already received in this life; 5. the proper inference from all which considerations is this; that we should patiently “wait on the Lord,” till the few and evil days of our pilgrimage pass away, and we arrive at the mansions prepared for us, in the house of our heavenly Father; till our warfare be accomplished, and terminate in the peace of God; till the storms and tempests of wintry time shall give place to the unclouded calm, and the ever blooming pleasures of eternal spring.

PSALM XXVIII.

ARGUMENT.

This Psalm, like the xxii. and many others, consisteth of two parts. For, 1—5. the true David appeareth in his state of humiliation and suffering; he prayeth for deliverance, and prophesieth the destruction of his enemies. 6—9. He singeth a sweet, though short hymn of triumph, and intercedeth for his church and people.

1. *Unto thee will I cry, O LORD, my rock, be not silent to me: lest if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit.*

The true David here maketh supplication, “with strong crying,” to the Father, that he may not be suffered to continue, like other men, under the dominion of the “grave.” The Christian prayeth, in the same words, to be delivered from the “pit” of

corruption; and mightily should he “cry” to Jehovah, the “rock” of his salvation, until his prayer be heard and answered.

2. *Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee: when I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle.*

Christ frequently interceded for his people, with his “hands lifted up” toward “heaven,” in fervent prayer; and—“I will,” saith the Apostle, “that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands.” 1 Tim. ii.

8. Shall our Redeemer pray for us, and shall we not pray for ourselves?

3. *Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity, which speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts.*

Christ, who alone is without sin, petitioneth that he may not be oppressed by sinners; he who is truth and love, prayeth to be preserved from the “false and malicious.” Let us pray to be made like him; and, like him, to be delivered from evil, especially from the evil of a “lying and flandering” tongue.

4. *Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavours; give them after the work of their hands, render to them their desert.*

5. *Because they regard not the works of the LORD, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up.*

In these verses, as indeed in most of the imprecatory passages, the imperative and the future are used promiscuously; “Give them—render them—he shall destroy them.” If therefore the verbs, in all such passages, were uniformly rendered in the “future,” every objection against the scripture imprecations would vanish at once, and they would appear clearly to be, what they are, namely, prophecies

pheries of the divine judgments, which have been since executed against the Jews, and which will be executed against all the enemies of Jehovah, and his Christ, whom neither the "works" of creation, nor those of redemption, can lead to repentance.

6. *Blessed be the LORD, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications.* 7. *The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth, and with my song will I praise him.*

The scene now changes, from the humiliation and sufferings, to the glory and triumph of Christ our Head, who, through the power of the Divinity, having overcome his enemies, may be supposed, at his resurrection from the dead, to have sung this strain; a strain, which they, who have been delivered from sin and sorrow, will best understand, by using it.

8. *The LORD is their strength, and he is the saving strength of his anointed, or, Christ.*

He who saved and exalted the Head, will also save and exalt the members; or, as St Paul expresseth it, "If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you; he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." Rom. viii. 11. And for the accomplishment of this glorious salvation, the salvation of his church, the Redeemer intercedeth, in the remaining verse of this Psalm.

9. *Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance; feed them also, and lift them up for ever.*

Save us, O Lord Jesus, from our sins; bless us, O thou Son of Abraham, with the blessing of righteousness; feed us, O thou good Shepherd of the sheep;

sheep; and lift us up for ever from the dust, O thou, who art the resurrection, and the life!

P S A L M XXIX.

ARGUMENT.

In this Psalm, the prophet 1, 2. calleth the kings of the earth to give glory to Jehovah, and to the VOICE, or WORD of his power; the effects of which, in the world and in the church, are most magnificently described; the same things being true of Thunder and Lightening in the former, and of the Word of God in the latter; as each of them is stiled, the "Voice of the LORD;" and both 3, 4. are mighty in operation; both 5. rend, and 6, 7. shake, and 8. pierce, and melt, and 9. make manifest. The Psalm concludes with 10. an acknowledgment of the extent and Glory of God's kingdom, and 11. a promise of victory and peace through him.

1. *Give unto the LORD, O ye mighty, give unto the LORD glory and strength.* 2. *Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.*

The prophet addresseth himself to the "mighty" ones of the earth, exhorting them to "give" God the "glory," and to submit themselves to the kingdom of Messiah; to honour that holy "name," by which they must be saved; to bow before his altars, "by whom kings reign;" and to cast down their crowns at the foot of the eternal throne.

3. *The voice of the LORD is upon the waters: the GOD of glory thundereth: the LORD is upon many waters.*

The reason why the mighty are exhorted to serve Jehovah, is because of his wondrous works, in the world, and in the church. By the "voice," or
"word"

“word” of God, the “waters” were driven down into the deep, and forbidden to overflow the earth any more; by the voice of God, the tumultuous and raging nations subsided, and the church was immoveably fixed upon the rock of her salvation; and by the Gospel of the “God of glory,” all those effects were produced in the hearts of men, which are wrought upon terrestrial substances, by its well known and most significant emblem, in the material heavens.

4. *The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.*

Of the power and majesty of God’s voice, when he speaketh from heaven in thunder, few hearts are insensible; of the power and majesty of his voice, when he spoke from heaven by his apostles, those “sons of” the spiritual “thunder,” the world was once fully sensible; O may the evangelical “Boanerges” so cause the glorious sound of the Gospel to be heard, under the whole heaven, that the world may again be made sensible thereof; before that voice of the Son of Man, which hath so often called sinners to repentance, shall call them to judgment!

5. *The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars; yea, the LORD breaketh the cedars of Libanus.*

The force of lightening is known to rend in pieces the tallest and strongest trees, in a moment; nor is the word of God less effectual in bringing down the loftiest pride, and rending the hardest heart of man, by the Spirit which accompanieth it. Thus was the persecuting Saul humbled and converted, by a “light” and a “voice” from “heaven;” so that instead of “breathing out threatnings and slaughters,” he asks, like a meek and dutiful child

child, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?"
Acts ix. 1. 6.

6. *He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Libanon and Sirion like a young unicorn.*

Thunder not only demolisheth the cedars, but "shaketh the mountains," on which they grow. Thus by the Gospel, "every mountain and hill was shaken, and made low; every high thing which exalted itself against the knowledge of Christ, was cast down, and brought into subjection." Isa. xl. 4. 2 Cor. x. 5.

7. *The voice of the LORD divideth the flames of fire.*

By the power of God, the "flames of fire" are "divided" and sent abroad from the clouds upon the earth, in the terrible form of lightening, that sharp and glittering sword of the Almighty, which no substance can withstand. The same power of God goeth forth by his word, "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword," penetrating, melting, enlightening, and inflaming the hearts of men. Acts ii. 3. Heb. iv. 12.

8. *The voice of the LORD shaketh the wilderness; the LORD shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh.*

The wilderness of Kadesh was a part of that wilderness, through which the Israelites passed, in their way to Canaan. See Numb. xiii. 26. Thunder shaketh those wide extended deserts, as well as Libanon and Sirion, mountains of Judea. The Gospel was first preached in Palestine, but from thence it went forth into the Gentile world, that dry, barren, and desolate "wilderness." The wilderness is yet once again to be shaken by "the voice of God," and to be removed for ever, that paradise may succeed in its place.

9. *The*

9. *The voice of the LORD maketh the hinds to calve, or, the oaks to tremble*, and discovereth the forests; and in his temple doth every one speak of his glory.*

Storms of thunder and lightening, attended often with whirlwinds, strip the trees of their leaves, and bark, and disclose the recesses of forests. It is by the "word of God," that the "hidden things of darkness are manifested," and the "counsels of all hearts revealed:" for "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him, with whom we have to do." 1 Cor. iv. 5. Heb. iv. 13. For these his marvellous works, in the natural and spiritual world, God is daily "glorified" in the "church."

10. *The LORD sitteth upon the flood: yea, the LORD sitteth a King for ever.*

The Lord Jesus sitteth on his throne, having all power in the dispensations of nature and of grace; by which, as he checketh at Pleasure the rage of the most boisterous elements in the former, so, with the same ease, he controlleth the fury of the enemy and oppressor in the latter; saying, with equal authority, in both cases, PEACE! BE STILL!

11. *The LORD will give strength unto his people; the LORD will bless his people with peace.*

From Jehovah, whose power and majesty have been with so much sublimity displayed in this whole Psalm, we are to expect, through faith and prayer, "strength" to overcome our enemies, whether ghostly or bodily; and also the blessing of "peace," which must be the fruit of victory. Thou, O Christ,

* So Bishop Lowth renders the clause in his Lectures. Aristotle, Plutarch, and Pliny, as cited by Mr Merrick, mention the case of abortion being sometimes caused among cattle by thunder. Whatever terrifies to any degree, may certainly produce such an effect. But the Bishop's interpretation is, in every respect, the most eligible. The evident connection with the words that follow,—*"discovereth the forests,"*—forbids us to doubt of its being right.

Christ, art the "mighty God;" and therefore thou art the "prince of peace." If. ix. 6.

VI. DAY. MORNING PRAYER. PSALM XXX.

ARGUMENT.

In this Psalm, or devout hymn, composed probably by David on his revisiting the sanctuary, after a joyful recovery from some dangerous sickness; he 1—3. returneth thanks for that event; and 4. calleth the church to do likewise, 5. drawing a comparison between temporary sufferings, and eternal rewards. 6, 7. He describeth his former prosperity, succeeded by affliction, with 8—10. the supplications poured forth to the Almighty, in the day of his distress; and then returneth again, 11. to celebrate his deliverance, and 12. to glorify God for the same. The Psalm is finely adapted to the case of the true David, and of Christians, his disciples and followers.

1. *I will extol thee, O LORD, for thou hast lifted me up, Heb. drawn me out, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.*

These words, if originally composed and uttered by king David, on occasion of some temporal mercy, apply, in a far more emphatical and beautiful manner, to the case of Messiah, suffering and rising again; as well as to that of his church and people, following him, both in his sufferings and resurrection; when we shall all lift up our voices, and sing together—"I will magnify thee, O Lord, for thou hast lifted me up; and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me!"

2. *O LORD, my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me.*

Deliverance

Deliverance is to be attained by “prayer;” for so David, and so the son of David obtained it; the former was “healed,” at his restoration to health and strength; the latter, at the resurrection; the soul is healed at its repentance and conversion; and the body will hereafter be repaired, beautified, and glorified, from the ruins of the grave.

3. O LORD *thou hast brought up my soul, or, animal frame, from the grave: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.*

The resurrection of David was a figurative one; that of Christ was a real one, as that of his saints will be; so that the Psalm is more strictly applicable to the true, than it ever could have been to the typical David. The latter clause may be rendered —“Thou hast quickened me from among them that go down to the pit;” which rendering is most agreeable to the former part of the verse—“Thou hast brought up my frame from the grave.”

4. *Sing unto the LORD, O ye Saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness, or, of his Holy One.*

The church of the redeemed is called upon to glorify the name of God, for his remembrance of “the king of saints,” and for the accomplishment of the promise, in raising him from the dead.

5. *For his anger endureth but a moment: in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.*

This is a most beautiful and affecting image of the sufferings and exaltation of Christ; of the sorrows and joys of a penitent; of the miseries of time, and the glories of eternity; of the night of death, and the morning of the resurrection.

6. *And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved.*

7. LORD, *by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.*

David, after his success against Goliath, and Christ, upon his triumphant entry into Jerufalem, were hailed by the acclamations and hosannas of the people, as the Christian may sometimes meet with the applauses of the world, and be led to think himself established in prosperity. But other troubles awaited David; and the blessed Jesus was nailed to the cross. Let not the disciple expect to be above his master; nor in the season of light and joy, neglect to prepare for the approaching days of sorrow and darkness.

8. *I cried to thee, O LORD, and unto the LORD I made supplication.* 9. *What profit is there in my blood when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? Shall it declare thy truth?* 10. *Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me; LORD, be thou my helper.*

These are some of "the strong cryings and supplications," which the true David poured forth, while under the cloud of his passion; and which are to be poured forth by us, when conformed to his image, in suffering affliction. The argument, here used, is a very powerful one, namely, the necessity of a resurrection from the grave, that man may be saved, and God glorified. The dead cannot praise, or serve God. They must live again for this purpose; and for this purpose it is, that we should desire to live, whether it be in the present world, or that which is to come.

11. *Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing; thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness.*

This might be true of David, delivered from his calamity; it was true of Christ, arising from the tomb, to die no more; it is true of the penitent, exchanging his sackcloth for the garments of salvation; and it will be verified in us all, at the last day,

day, when we shall put off the dishonours of the grave, to shine in glory everlasting.

12. *To the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent : O LORD my GOD, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.*

The end of Christ's resurrection, of the salvation of the souls of the faithful, and the resurrection of their bodies, is one and the same, namely, the glory of God, who is the author of every kind of deliverance ; whose praise should, therefore, be re-founded by the grateful tongues of the redeemed, from generation to generation ; as the tongue then becometh the "glory" of man, when it is employed in setting forth the glory of God.

P S A L M XXXI.

ARGUMENT.

In this Psalm, ver. 5th of which was pronounced by our Lord, when expiring on the cross, we hear the true David, like his representative of old, 1—6. supplicating for deliverance ; 7, 8. rejoicing in the divine favour and assistance ; 9—13. describing his afflicted and forlorn state ; 14—18. returning again to his prayers ; 19—22. celebrating the mercies of God to the children of Adam ; and 23, 24. exhorting his saints to courage and perseverance, under their troubles in the world.

1. *In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust, let me never be ashamed : deliver me in thy righteousness.*

God is faithful and just, to save those, who, in time of trouble, renouncing all dependance on themselves and the creature, "put their trust" only in his mercy. His honour is engaged by his promise, not to let such be "ashamed" of their confidence.

2. *Bow down thine ear to me, deliver me speedily : be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me.*

The Christian, like his blessed Master, is “be-sieged” by many and powerful enemies, infomuch that, notwithstanding all human precautions, “unless Jehovah keep the city, the watchman waketh in vain.” Who, in such circumstances, would not pray for “speedy” deliverance?

3. *For thou art my rock and my fortress : therefore for thy name sake lead me, and guide me.*

God will be the “rock” and “fortress” of those who esteem him as such ; and after having been so, through all the dangers and difficulties of life, he will “lead” and “guide” them to the realms of peace and rest, for the sake of that “name” which implieth salvation.

4. *Pull me out of that net which they have laid privily for me : for thou art my strength.*

As David prayed for an escape from the secret conspiracies that were entered into against him, so did Christ pray for deliverance from the snares of death ; and so doth the Christian pray to be extricated from the toils both of sin and death.

5. *Into thine hand I commend my spirit ; thou hast redeemed me, O LORD, thou God of truth.*

David, in his distresses, might by these words express his resignation of himself and his affairs into the hands of God ; but it is certain that Christ actually did expire upon the cross, with the former part of this verse in his mouth. Luke xxiii. 46. Nor is there any impropriety in the application of the latter part to him ; since, as man, the surety and representative of our nature, he was “redeemed” from the power of the enemy, by “the God of truth” accomplishing his promises.

6. *I have hated them that regard lying vanities : but I trust in the LORD.*

They may hope for redemption, who so “trust in God,” as to trust in nothing beside him; for all else is “vanity,” and will deceive.

7. *I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy ; for thou hast considered my trouble ; and hast known my soul in adversities ;* 8. *And hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy ; thou hast set my feet in a large room.*

The considerations that make the soul “cheerful,” in the hour of affliction, are, that God is merciful; that as he is not ignorant, so neither is he unmindful of our troubles; that he is a friend, who “knows” us in adversity, no less than in prosperity; that he hath not subjected us to the necessity of being overcome by our spiritual enemies; but hath, “with the temptation, made a way for us to escape.”

9. *Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in trouble ; mine eye is consumed with grief, yea my soul, or, animal frame, and my belly.*

Upon the strength of the foregoing considerations, supplication is here made for deliverance from troubles, which wasted the eyes with weeping, and exhausted the strength and vigour of the frame. Such were the troubles of David; and, more emphatically, those of Christ; and sickness and sorrow will one day teach us all to use the same expressions.

10. *For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing : my strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed.*

Do we not, in these words, hear the voice of the “man of sorrows,” suffering, not indeed for his own “iniquity,” but for ours, of which, he frequently, in the Psalms, speaks, as if it were his own.

If sin was punished in the innocent Lamb of God, let us not expect that it should be unpunished in us, unless we repent; and let our punishment never fail to remind us of our guilt.

11. *I was a reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbours, and a fear to mine acquaintance; they that did see me without, fled from me.*

These particulars were never more applicable to David, than they were to the Son of David, when his acquaintance, at beholding him reviled by his enemies, were terrified from attending him, and when "all the disciples forsook him, and fled." The same things are often too true of the faith and the church. They are true likewise of every man, when he suffers the dishonours of the last enemy, death; when he is "a fear" to his dearest friends, and they are obliged to forsake him.

12. *I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind; I am like a broken vessel.*

This was literally the case of Christ, when laid in the sepulchre, and esteemed no longer the object of hope by his friends, or of fear by his enemies. That he should be so "forgotten," while dead, is less wonderful, than that this should have happened since his glorious resurrection, and ascension into heaven.

13. *For I have heard the slander of many, fear was on every side, while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life.*

The slander of Shimei, and the counsel of Ahitophel against king David, direct us to the slanders of the Jews, and the counsels of Judas and the Sanhedrim against the beloved Son of God, who, in his church, will be persecuted in like manner, by the ungodly, to the world's end.

14. *But*

14. *But I trusted in thee, O LORD: I said, thou art my God.* 15. *My times are in thy hand; deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me.* 16. *Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: save me for thy mercies sake.*

In all our afflictions, after the example of the typical, and of the true David, we are to have recourse to the prayer of faith; we are to consider, that Jehovah is our God and Saviour; that the times and the seasons of prosperity and adversity, of life and death, are in his hand; and therefore on him we are to wait, till the day of mercy shall dawn, and the shadows fly away.

17. *Let me not be ashamed, O LORD, for I have called upon thee; let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave.* 18. *Let the lying lips be put to silence; which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.*

Ahitophel, for his treason against David; and Judas, for his treachery against Christ, felt the force of this prophetic imprecation, or prediction, which will also, one day, take its full effect, in the confusion of all impenitent calumniators and traitors.

19. *O how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee, before the sons of men!*

Peace of conscience, the comforts of the Spirit, and the hope of future glory, will teach the soul, even in the darkest night of affliction, to break forth into this exulting strain of gratitude and praise, for the blessings experienced by those who confess their Saviour before men.

20. *Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride, Heb. conspiracies of men; thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.*

In times of contention and persecution, there is a refuge for the faithful in “the tabernacle of David,”

vid," which is the mystical body of Christ, inhabited by the presence of God. In this sacred "pavilion," they enjoy the pleasures of contemplation and devotion, regardless of the distant tumult and confusion of the world.

21. *Blessed be the LORD; for he hath shewed me marvellous kindness in a strong city.*

The man Christ, and the church with him, like David of old, here rejoice in the protection and saving power of God, in the same manner as in Isai. xxvi. 1. "We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks."

22. *For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes; nevertheless, thou heardest the voice of my supplications, when I cried unto thee.*

Whoever shall consider the troubles of the beloved Son of God, bereaved for a season of the light of heaven, only that it might afterwards arise upon him with the greater lustre, will be taught never to faint under the chastisement of the Lord; since the darkness of the night argues the approaching dawn of the day.

23. *O love the LORD, all ye his saints: for the LORD preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.* 24. *Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD.*

The exhortation is raised from the consideration of the deliverance of Christ, with the destruction of his enemies; which ought to strengthen and comfort the hearts of believers, under all their afflictions here below; that so, after having suffered courageously with their Master, they may triumphantly enter into his joy and glory.

VI DAY

VI DAY. EVENING PRAYER. PSALM XXXII.

ARGUMENT.

In this Psalm, which is the second of those stiled Penitential, David, as a model of true repentance, 1, 2. extolleth the blessedness of those whose sins are forgiven them; 3, 4. describeth the torment endured by him, before he confessed his sin; and 5. the goodness of God in pardoning it, when confessed; 6. he foretelleth that others, after his example, should obtain the like mercy; 7. declareth his hope and confidence in his God; who 8. is introduced, promising wisdom and grace to the penitent; 9, 10. sinners are warned against obstinacy; and 11. the righteous exhorted to rejoice in God their Saviour.

1 *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.* 2. *Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.*

As the sick man is eloquent in the praise of health, so the sinner beginneth this his confession of sin with an encomium on righteousness, longing earnestly to be made a partaker of the evangelical "blessedness;" to be delivered from the guilt and the power of sin; to be pardoned and sanctified, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. See Rom. iv. 6.

3. *When I kept silence, my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long.*

In opposition to the blessedness above-mentioned the penitent now proceeds to declare his own wretched estate, occasioned by his "keeping silence," or not confessing his sin, which therefore rankled and festered inwardly, occasioning torment inexpressible. The disorders of the mind, as well as those of the body, should be communicated to persons skilful in affwaging and removing them.

Many

Many might thereby be saved from the horrible crime of self murder, which is generally committed in agonies of solitary remorse and despair.

4. *For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me : my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.*

Outward calamities, and inward pangs of conscience, are the strokes of God's hand, designed to humble the sinner, and lead him to confession ; and in the infliction of these, such severity is sometimes necessary, that the patient is brought to death's door, before a turn can be given to the disease ; but the pain of a blow upon an ulcerated part, however exquisite, is well compensated for, if, by promoting a discharge, it effect a cure.

5. *I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid : I said I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD ; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.*

What is this, but the Gospel itself—" If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." 1 John i. 9. And thus it happened, in one case, to David, who had no sooner confessed his sin to the prophet Nathan, but an answer of peace was instantly vouchsafed—" The LORD hath put away thy sin." 2 Sam. xii. 13. Were angels to descend from heaven, to comfort the dejected spirit of a sinner, they could say nothing more effectual for the purpose, than what is said in this verse of our Psalm. But practice will be the best comment upon it.

6. *For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found : surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.*

Encouraged, by this example and declaration of David, to hope for mercy, on confession of sin, it is here foretold, that humble penitents shall be led to make their prayer unto God in the acceptable time, and

and in the day of salvation, while he "may be found;" that so they may be forgiven, and preserved from great and overwhelming calamities; from the fears of death, and the terrors of judgment.

7. *Thou art my hiding place, thou shalt preserve me from trouble: thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.*

The penitent, happily returned to the house of his heavenly Father, now esteemeth himself safe under his protection; and resteth in full assurance that all his sorrows shall one day be turned into joy, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

8. *I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way in which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.*

The Redeemer is here introduced, returning an answer to the penitent's declarations of his humility and faith; promising "instruction" in that wisdom which every man wants, who continues in sin, together with the direction of the Spirit in the way of righteousness, and the superintendence of his watchful care. Man cannot prevent evils, because he cannot foresee them. "Next therefore to the protecting power of God's Wing, is the securing prospect of his Eye," saith Dr South.

9. *Be ye not as the horse, or, as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.*

The person speaking in the former verse, or the prophet himself, exhorts sinners to repent, at the invitation and encouragement afforded them; and not to continue, like brutes, fierce, obstinate, and senseless, until, like them, they must be tamed and managed by force, and the severity of discipline.

10. *Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.*

They

They who are not to be reformed by gentler methods, must learn righteousness under the rod of affliction, in the school of the cross; and happy are they, if their "sorrows" may so turn to their advantage. But happier are those, who, led by the goodness of God to repentance and faith, enjoy the light and protection of "mercy."

11. *Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.**

In the beginning of the Psalm, the penitent, smitten with a sense of his wretchedness on account of his sins, extolleth the blessedness of the righteous; he now again doth the same, through a joyful sense of his pardon, and restoration to that happy state. Let us "rejoice," O Lord Jesus; but let us rejoice "in thee," and in thy salvation; so shall we rejoice indeed!

PSALM XXXIII.

ARGUMENT.

In this Psalm, the prophet 1—3. exhorteth the faithful to a spiritual and holy joy in their God, whom they are to praise 4, 5. for his truth, righteousness, and mercy; 6—9. for his power, displayed in the works of creation; 10—19. for the wisdom of his providence, and the care he hath of his people. 20, 21. The righteous, in answer to the exhortation, declare their joy and confidence in God their Saviour, and 22. prefer a petition for his manifestation.

1. *Rejoice*

* Bishop Lowth is of opinion, this verse should be the first of the ensuing Psalm, the repetition being in the very style and manner of the Hebrews, and the words repeated and varied with the greatest art and elegance. "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous; and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart—Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous; for praise is comely for the upright." See Merrick's Annotations.

1. *Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous, for praise is comely for the upright.*

God, and not the world, is the fountain of "joy;" which sinners talk of, but the righteous only possess. "Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say, rejoice." Philip. iv. 4.

2. *Praise the LORD with harp: sing unto him with psaltery, and an instrument of ten strings.*

Music, both vocal and instrumental, is of eminent use in setting forth the praises of God; but there is no instrument like the rational soul, and no melody like that of well-tuned affections. When this music accompanies the other, the sacred harmony of the church is compleat.

3. *Sing unto him a new song, play skilfully with a loud noise.*

"Old things are passed away," and the ideas of a Christian are to be transferred from the old world, and the old dispensation, to the "new;" since, under the Gospel, "all things are become new," and all men ought to become so. Rev. xxi. 1, 5. Abilities of every kind are never so well employed, as in the service of him who giveth them.

4. *For the word of the LORD is right: and all his works are done in truth.*

God is to be praised for his word, and his works; for his rectitude in the one, and his truth in the other; for his faithfulness in accomplishing by the latter, what his goodness had promised in the former. The sense will be the same, if we suppose that by the "word of the Lord" is meant the personal WORD, or Son of God, all whose "works" wrought for the salvation of men, "are done in truth," as witnessed by the law and the prophets.

5. *He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness, Heb. mercy of the LORD.*

“Justice” is an attribute inseparable from God; and what deserves the praises of man, as it excites the admiration of angels, is, that, without sacrificing this formidable attribute, he hath contrived to fill and overflow the earth with his “mercy.”

6. *By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath, or, spirit of his mouth.*

It is true, that the world was created by the “word,” or “fiat” of God, which may be here described, after the manner of men, as formed by “the breath of his mouth.” It is also true, that, by the instrumentality of the eternal WORD, and the eternal SPIRIT, the old heavens and earth were made; as also the new heavens and earth, which shall succeed them. Glory is due from man to God, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit.

7. *He gathereth the waters of the sea together, as an heap: he layeth up the depth in store houses.*

The next instance of divine power and goodness, for which we are here excited to be thankful, is that of laying up the waters, which originally covered the face of the earth, in the great deep beneath. And let us reflect, that, by the same divine power and goodness, a deluge of wickedness and violence is prevented from overwhelming the faith and the church.

8. *Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him:* 9. *For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.*

He who made all things, who preserves all things, and can in a moment destroy all things, is the proper object of our “fear;” and that we fear him so little, is a most convincing proof of the corruption and blindness of our hearts.

10. *The*

10. *The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought : he maketh the devices of the people of none effect.*

11. *The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever ; the thoughts of his heart to all generations.*

The wisdom of God's providence is not less worthy of adoration, than the power of his might. By this wisdom, the "counsels" of states and empires are either directed to the accomplishment of the great counsel of heaven ; or, if they attempt to thwart it, are blasted, and "brought to nothing." History will force all, who read it with this view, to acknowledge thus much. And with this view, indeed, it should always be read.

12. *Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD ; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.*

The foregoing considerations of the righteousness, truth, mercy, power, and wisdom of Jehovah, naturally suggest a reflection on the "blessedness" of the church, in whose cause all those attributes are, by the covenant of grace, engaged and exercised. But who now esteems this blessedness as it deserves ?

13. *The LORD looketh from heaven : he beholdeth all the sons of men.* 14. *From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth.* 15. *He fashioneth their hearts alike : he considereth all their works.*

How great must be the advantage of living in his favour, and under his protection, who, from the watch-tower of his eternal throne, beholdeth, directeth, and controlleth at pleasure, not only the actions and the words, but the very thoughts and imaginations of all the inhabitants of the earth ! For, this being the case, it is most certain that

16. *There is no king saved by the multitude of an host : a mighty man is not delivered by much strength.*

17. *An horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver any by his great strength.*

All the power in the world is less than nothing, if brought into the field against that of God; so that the fate of every battle will depend upon the side which he shall please to take, who is equally able to confound the many and the mighty, and to give victory to the weak and the few. The same is true of that spiritual warfare, in which we are all engaged.

18. *Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him; upon them that hope in his mercy:* 19. *To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.*

The ever waking eye of providence, which looketh on all, looketh with favour and loving kindness on such as “fear” God without despondency, and “hope” in him without presumption; their bodies are often wonderfully preserved in times of danger and want; but, what is of far greater consequence, their souls are saved from spiritual and everlasting death, and nourished, in the wilderness, with the bread of heaven.

20. *Our soul waiteth for the LORD: he is our help and our shield.* 21. *For our heart shall rejoice in him; because we have trusted in his holy name.*

In answer to the foregoing exhortation, the “righteous” are here introduced, declaring their fixed resolution to persevere in faith and patience, “waiting” for the coming of their Lord and Saviour, in whom they “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory,” by reason of that humble and holy confidence which they have in him.

22. *Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in thee.*

The

The “hope” of the church was always in Messiah. Of old she prayed for the “mercy” of his first advent; now she expecteth his second. Grant us, O Lord, hope, of which we may never be disappointed.

P S A L M XXXIV.

ARGUMENT.

The prophet, escaped out of the hands of his enemies, uttereth a song of praise, in words which the Christian now employeth to celebrate the far greater deliverance of his Saviour, and himself by him, from the power of more formidable adversaries. 1—7. He calleth his brethren to rejoice with him, and to magnify God for the favour and protection vouchsafed to his servant, in a time of danger; 8—10. he exhorteth others to taste and experience the goodness of Jehovah to such as fear him; and for that purpose, 11—14. instructeth them in the nature and effects of divine fear; after which, 15—22. he sweetly descanteth on the certainty of redemption from all the tribulations endured by the faithful in this mortal life.

1. *I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.*

The Christian, delivered from many perils, yet continually liable to more, finds cause, at all seasons, and in all situations, to bless God. “In all things he gives thanks, and rejoices even in tribulation,” which cannot deprive him of the true ground of all joy, the salvation of Christ.

2. *My soul shall make her boast in the LORD; the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.*

The glory of every action is to be ascribed to God, whose interpositions, in behalf of his people of

old time, afford consolation and joy to the humble and afflicted. But chiefly are the members of the church bound to give thanks for the resurrection and triumph of Christ, their head. "The humble" can never "hear" of this, without being "glad."

3. *O, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.*

The Christian, not only himself magnifies God, but exhorts others to do likewise; and longs for that day to come, when all nations and languages, laying aside their contentions and animosities, their prejudices and their errors, their unbelief, their heresies, and their schisms, shall make their sound to be heard as one, in magnifying and exalting their great Redeemer's name.

4. *I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.*

The ground of this rejoicing, to the typical David, might be his deliverance from his enemies; to the true David, it was his rescue from the powers of darkness; to the believing soul, it is her salvation from sin; and to the body it will be, redemption from the grave. Then the Lord will deliver us "from all our fears;" and this he will do, if we "seek" him, in his scriptures, and in his ordinances.

5. *They looked unto him and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.*

Faith is the eye, sin the blindness, and Christ the light of the soul. The blindness must be removed, and the eye must be directed to the light, which will then illuminate the whole man, and guide him in the way of salvation. He who thus looketh unto the sun of righteousness, for light and direction, shall never be confounded.

6. *This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.*

David,

David, when he escaped from his enemies, might be “poor” and destitute. But HE was emphatically “the poor man,” who became so for our sakes; who not only possessed nothing, but desired nothing in this world. HE “cried, and Jehovah heard him, and delivered him out of all his troubles;” as he will hear and deliver the “poor in spirit,” who pray unto him. For

7. *The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.*

The divine protection and salvation, vouchsafed to the faithful, is here signified, whether we suppose that by “the angel of Jehovah,” is meant the presence of Christ in the church militant, as of old in the camp of Israel; or the ministration of created spirits to the heirs of salvation, as in the case of Elisha. 2 Kings vi. 17. Let the consideration of these invisible guardians, who are also spectators of our actions, at once restrain us from evil, and incite us to good.

8. *O taste, and see, that the LORD is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him.*

David saw and tasted the goodness of Jehovah, when delivered from his adversaries; the son of David, when raised from the dead. Both invite us, by “trusting” in God, to behold and experience, in our own persons, the mercies and consolations of heaven.

9. *O fear the LORD, ye his saints; for there is no want to them that fear him.* 10. *The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.*

He who seeketh the Lord, shall find him; and he who hath found Him, can want nothing. Faith, hope, charity, temperance, purity, patience, and contentment, are the true riches, and the lack of them

them the poverty to be most dreaded; since to a Christian, persecution, loss, sickness, nay death itself, is gain. In the mean time, God is never wanting to provide for his servants, what he seeth needful and best, in matters temporal; while tyrants and oppressors, who are, in the world, what "lions" are in a forest, are often, by the just judgment of heaven, reduced to want that which they have ravished from others.

11. *Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD.*

They, who, by contemplating the advantages described above, which attend the fear of the Lord, are become desirous of obtaining that fear, must hearken to their heavenly Father, who by his prophet "speaketh unto them as unto children," offering to teach them the good and the right way.

12. *What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good?*

Every Christian professeth to "desire," not only an animal, but a spiritual "life;" to love, not an old age in time, but an eternal duration; that he may "see those good things" which God hath prepared, not upon earth, but in heaven, for them that love him. Let us observe, therefore, upon what terms such blessings are offered.

13. *Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.*

The tongue is an instrument of much good, or much evil. Life and death are in its power; he that keepeth it, keepeth his soul; and he who offendeth not therewith, is a perfect man: it is an unruly member, and the first work of the fear of God must be to bridle it, that no prophane, unclean, slanderous, deceitful, or idle words proceed out of the mouth. And as the heart is to the tongue,
what

what the fountain is to the stream, that must first be purified.

14. *Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.*

Not the tongue only, but the whole man is to be corrected and regulated by the fear of God, operating unto repentance from dead works, and, through faith, unto obedience of life. And he who hath thus obtained peace with God, must ever remember to follow peace with men, reconciling his brethren, if at variance; himself, if it be possible, being at variance with no one.

15. *The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.* 16. *The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.*

The righteous may be afflicted, like David, and like a greater than David; and their oppressors may for a time be triumphant; but in the end, the former will be delivered and exalted; the latter will either cease to be remembered, or they will be remembered with infamy.

17. *The righteous, cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of their troubles.*

This great and comforting truth is attested by the history of the deliverances of Israel from Egypt, Babylon, &c. of Jonah from the whale, of the three children from the flames, &c. wrought at the supplications of the respective parties in distress; but above all, by the salvation of the world, through the intercession of Jesus Christ. The death of martyrs is their deliverance; and the greatest of all deliverances.

18. *The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.*

We

We are apt to overlook men, in proportion as they are humbled beneath us; God regards them in that proportion. Vessels of honour are made of that clay, which is "broken" into the smallest parts.

19. *Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.*

Afflictions all must suffer; but those of the righteous end in victory and glory. What soldier would not cheerfully undergo the hardships of a campaign, upon this condition? "In the world," saith the Captain of our salvation, "ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." John. xvi. 33.

20. *He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.*

It is God who preserveth to man the strength of his body, which lieth in the bones; and that vigour of his spirit, which consisteth in firm and well established principles of faith and holiness. The bones of the true paschal Lamb continued whole during the passion, and those of the saints shall be raised whole at the last day, when the mystical body of Christ shall come out of its sufferings, no less perfect and entire, than did the natural.

21. *Evil shall slay the wicked, and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate.*

The evil of punishment springs from the evil of sin; and no sin works such "desolation," as a malicious "hatred" and persecution of the true sons and servants of God. Whoso doubts the truth of this, let him only survey and consider attentively the desolation of the once highly favoured nation, for their enmity against the king of righteousness, and his faithful subjects.

22. *The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.*

The

The frequent prosperity of the wicked, and the troubles of the righteous in this world, strike powerfully upon the sense, and are, for that reason, too apt to efface from our minds the notices, given us by faith, of that future inversion of circumstances, which is to take place after death. To renew therefore the impression of such an interesting truth, the redemption of the afflicted righteous is so often insisted on, in the course of this Psalm. Enable us, O Lord, “to walk by faith, and not by sight,” until we come to thy heavenly kingdom; where, with all thy saints, made perfect through sufferings, we shall “bless and magnify thee at all times,” and thy “praise will continually be in our mouth,” for evermore.

VII. DAY. MORNING PRAYER. PSALM XXXV.

ARGUMENT.

The prophet, in this Psalm, as in the xxiid, which it resembles, personating Messiah, in his state of humiliation and suffering, 1—3. beseecheth Jehovah to interpose in his behalf; 4—8. predicteth the confusion of his enemies, and 9, 10. his own triumph; 11—16. describeth the malice of his persecutors against him, and his love towards them; 19—25. repeateth his supplications for deliverance, and enlargeth upon the cruel insults he met with; 26. he again foretelleth the destruction of the adversary, and 27, 28, the exultation of the faithful.

1. *Plead my cause, O LORD, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me.*

David in his afflictions, Christ in his passion, the church under persecution, and the Christian in the hour of temptation, supplicate the Almighty to appear in their behalf, and to vindicate their cause.

2. *Take*

2. *Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help.* 3. *Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.*

Jehovah is here described, as a “man of war,” going forth to the battle against the enemies of Messiah and his church: the protection afforded by his mercy is figured by the shield of the warrior, covering his body from the darts of the enemy; and the vengeance of his uplifted arm is represented by the offensive weapons used among men, such as the spear and the sword. “If God be for us, who can be against us?” If he speaketh salvation, who shall threaten destruction? See Deut. xxxii. 41.

4. *Let them be confounded, or, they shall be confounded and put to shame, that seek after my soul: let them, be, or, they shall be turned back and brought to confusion, that devise my hurt.*

The consequence of the Omnipotent appearing in arms against his adversaries, is here foretold. And the prediction has long since been verified in the “confusion” of Saul, and of the Jews, as it will be finally fulfilled in that of Satan and all his adherents, at the last day; for the manifestation of which day the church now waiteth, in faith and patience.

5. *Let them be, or, they shall be chaff before the wind; and let the angel of the LORD, or, the angel of the LORD shall chase them.*

The Jews, separated from the church and people of Christ, become useless and unprofitable to any good work, possessing only the empty ceremonies and husks of their religion, and by the breath of the divine displeasure dispersed over the face of the earth, afford a striking comment on this verse, and as striking an admonition to every opposer of the holy Jesus. See Ps. i. 4.

6. *Let*

6. *Let their way, or, their way shall be dark and slippery, and let the angel of the LORD, or, the angel of the LORD shall persecute them.*

A traveller, benighted in a bad road, is an expressive emblem of a sinner walking in the slippery and dangerous ways of temptation, without knowledge to direct his steps, to shew him his danger, or extricate him from it; while an enemy is in pursuit of him, whom he can neither resist, nor avoid. Deliver us, O Lord, from all blindness, but above all, from that which is judicial!

7. *For without cause have they hid for me their net, in a pit, which without cause they have digged for my soul.*

8. *Let destruction, or, destruction shall come upon him at unawares, and let his net that he hath hid, or, his net that he hath hid shall catch himself; into that very destruction let him, or, he shall fall.*

The causeless persecution raised against David by Saul, and against our Lord by the Jews, reverted, through the righteous judgment of God, on the heads of the persecutors. The innocent birds escaped; and they, who set the toils, were themselves taken therein. Saul lost the kingdom which he thought to have secured, and his life also; and the Jews, who crucified Christ, lest "the Romans should take away their place and nation," had their place and nation taken away by those Romans, for that very reason. In these histories, all impenitent persecutors of the faith, the church, and the servants of God, may read their doom.

9. *And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD; it shall rejoice in his salvation.* 10. *All my bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him!*

These verses, as they describe the joy which the soul and body of Christ were to experience after the

resurrection, so shall they one day be sung by the mystical body of the Lord, when delivered from the power of the spoiler, and raised entire from the dust. In the mean time, they may express our gratitude for any temporal preservation from enemies, from sad casualties, and dangerous temptations.

11. *False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge, Heb. asked me things that I knew not.* 12. *They rewarded me evil for good, to the spoiling of my soul.*

This was never more literally true of David, than it was of the holy Jesus, when standing before Pontius Pilate, he received no other return from the Jews, for all the gracious words which he had spoken, and all the merciful works which he had done among them, than that of being slandered, and put to death.

13. *But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled, or, afflicted my soul with fasting, and my prayer returned into mine own bosom.*

If David prayed, fasting in sackcloth, for Saul and his associates, the son of David, to heal the souls of men, put on the veil of mortal flesh, and appeared in the form and habit of a penitent, fasting forty days and forty nights, making continual intercession for transgressors, and grieving to think that any men, by their obstinacy, should deprive themselves of the benefits thereof.

14. *I behaved myself, Heb. I walked as though it had been my friend, or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother, or, as a mother that mourneth.*

He who so passionately lamented the natural death of Saul, doubtless bewailed greatly his spiritual death of sin: and he who took a comprehensive view of the sins and sorrows of Jerusalem, wept over that wretched city, with the tender affection of a “friend,” a “brother,” and a “mother—O Jerusalem,

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings !”

15. *But in mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together : yea, the abjects, or, smiters gathered themselves together against me, and I knew it not ; they did tear me, and ceased not.*

When the blessed Jesus was suffering for the sins of men, he was insulted by those men for whose sins he suffered. He gave not only his reputation to the revilers, but also his back to the “smiters,” though not conscious of the crimes for which they pretended to punish him.

16. *With hypocritical mockers in feasts, or, among the profligates the makers of mock gnashed upon me with their teeth.*

However this might be true in the case of David, it certainly had a literal accomplishment in the scoffs and taunts of the chief priests and others, when Christ was hanging on the cross—“Ah thou that destroyest the temple, &c. He trusted in God, &c. Let him come down from the cross, &c. &c. &c.” nay, one of the thieves, crucified with him “cast the same in his teeth.” Whosoever considers these things, will not be surprised at the expostulation in the following verse.

17. *Lord, how long wilt thou look on ? Rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling from the lions.*

Christ prayeth, like David of old, for the manifestation of the promised mercy ; for the deliverance of the nature which he had assumed, and which he delighted in. Who does not behold, in him, surrounded by his enraged and implacable enemies, a second Daniel, praying in the den of “lions ?”

18. *I will give thee thanks in the great congregation ; I will praise thee among much people, or, the strong people.*

This verse is exactly parallel to Pf. xxii. 25. wherein, after an enumeration of his sufferings, our Lord predicted the praise and glory that should accrue to God in the church, after his resurrection, from the preaching of the Apostles ; which passage see, and compare ; as also, Isai. xxv. 3. and Rev. vii. 9.

19. *Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me ; neither let them wink with the eye, that hate me without a cause.*

The prophet, in the person of Christ, returneth again to make supplication that an end may be put to the insults, the scoffs, and the sneers of the reprobate. O come that day, when they shall cease for evermore !

20. *For they speak not peace, but they devise deceitful matters against them that are quiet in the land.* 21. *Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me, and said, aha, aha, our eye hath seen it.*

David would have lived “ quietly ” under the government of Saul : our Lord did not aim at temporal sovereignty over the Jews ; nor did the primitive Christians desire to intermeddle with the politics of the world ; yet all were betrayed, mocked, and persecuted, as rebels, and usurpers, and the pests of society.

22. *This thou hast seen, O LORD, keep not silence ; O LORD, be not far from me.* 23. *Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment, even unto my cause, my God, and my Lord.* 24. *Judge me, O LORD my God, according to thy righteousness, and let them not rejoice over me.*

God “ seeth ” and knoweth all things ; yet he permitteeth those, who love him best, to be often and long afflicted and oppressed, seeming as one at a “ distance,” or “ silent,” or “ asleep,” that is, regardless.

gardless of what passes. At such times, we are not to remit, but to double our diligence in prayer, reiterating our cries—"Lord save us! we perish!" Then will he "awake, and arise, and rebuke the winds and the seas, and there shall be a calm."

24. *Let them not say in their hearts, ah, so would we have it: let them not say, we have swallowed him up.*

Messiah prayeth for an end of his sufferings; that the enemies of mankind might not triumph in his destruction; that death might not finally "swallow him up," but be itself "swallowed up in victory." The church daily maketh the same request.

26. *Let them, or, they shall be ashamed and brought to confusion together, that rejoice at mine hurt: let them, or, they shall be clothed with shame and dishonour, that magnify themselves against me.*

The accomplishment of this prediction by the resurrection of Jesus, and the destruction of Jerusalem, is well known. There are two events to come, parallel to these two which are past, viz. the resurrection of the faithful, and the destruction of the world; when all who, like the Jews, have "rejoiced in the hurt" of Messiah, and have "magnified themselves against him," will, like the Jews, be covered with everlasting "confusion."

27. *Let them, or, they shall shout for joy and be glad, that favour my righteous cause: yea, let them, or, they shall say continually, Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant.* 28. *And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness, and of thy praise, all the day long.*

As the preceding verse foretold the sorrow of the enemies, so these two describe the joy of the friends to Messiah, upon his victory and exaltation, which have been, and shall continue to be, celebrated by the church, in these divine hymns, indited by the

Holy Spirit for that purpose, until the songs of time shall end in the hallelujahs of eternity.

P S A L M XXXVI.

ARGUMENT.

In the four first verses of this Psalm, the prophet describeth the principles, the actions, the conversation, and the imaginations of his wicked persecutors; and from thence raising his thoughts to heaven, 5—9. celebrateth the mercy and loving-kindness of Jehovah; for a continuation of which to himself and the church, he fervently prayeth, 10, 11. and 12. foreseeth the downfall of the ungodly.

1. *The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes.*

If the present reading in the original be the true one, the meaning must be this—The transgressions of a bad man shew plainly, in the apprehension of a good one, that the former is destitute of a true fear of God. Bishop Lowth, by a slight alteration or two in the text, renders it to this effect—“The wicked man according to the wickedness in his heart, saith, There is no fear of God before mine eyes.”* The great truth which the prophet here declareth himself to be convinced of, is, that all wickedness proceedeth from the absence of “the fear of God,” in the person who committeth it; that fear being a principle, which, while it is predominant in the man, will restrain him from transgression. Our laws suppose as much, when in the form of indicting a criminal, they attribute the commission of the offence to his, “not having the fear of God before his eyes.”

2. *Fear*

* See Merrick's Annotations.

2. *For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful: or, when his sin is ready to be found out, and to be hated.*

He who hath lost “the fear of God,” is first led into sin, and then detained in it; because, having forgotten the great witness and judge of his actions, he vainly thinks his crimes may be concealed, or disguised; till a discovery breaks the charm, and disperses the delusion. The last day will shew strange instances of this folly.

3. *The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit: he hath left off to be wise, and to do good: or, to understand, that he may do good.*

If the fear of God be not in the heart, “iniquity and deceit” will be under the tongue; and then, an apostasy from wisdom and goodness, or the wisdom of goodness which is the only true wisdom, cannot be far off.

4. *He deviseth mischief upon his bed, he setteth himself in a way that is not good; he abhorreth not evil.*

From the actions and the words of him who hath not the fear of God before his eyes, the prophet goeth back to the thoughts and imaginations of his heart, which, even in retirement and solitude, are busily employed upon evil, as those of the righteous are, at those seasons, upon God and goodness. A man may know the state of his mind, in some measure, from his morning and evening thoughts “upon his bed.” He who doth not give diligence to “set himself in a good way,” will soon be set in one that is not good; and he who doeth not “abhor” sin, will, e’er long, delight in it.

5. *Thy mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds, or, skies.* 6. *Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep.*

From

From the wickedness of the world, in which we live, we must lift up our eyes, for help and comfort, to the mercy and truth of God, boundless, pure, and beneficial, as the heavens over our heads; to his righteousness, fixed and permanent, as the everlasting hills; and to his judgments, stupendous and unfathomable, as the waters of the great deep. Truth will engage mercy to accomplish the promised salvation of the elect; and righteousness will employ judgment in executing upon the reprobate the vengeance that is due.

7. *O LORD, thou preservest man and beast. How excellent is thy loving kindness, O GOD! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.*

The good providence of God extendeth over all creatures, nourishing and preserving them, as well as man, for whose use they were made. We can never enough value and extol the “loving kindness” of him, whose overshadowing “wings” protect and cherish us on earth, in order to bear us from thence to heaven. See Matt. xxiii 37. Deut. xxxii. 11.

8. *They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house: and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.*

In heaven alone the thirst of an immortal soul after happiness can be satisfied. There the streams of Eden will flow again. They who drink of them shall forget their earthly poverty, and remember the miseries of the world no more. Some drops from the celestial cup are sufficient, for a time, to make us forget our sorrows, even while we are in the midst of them. What then may we not expect from full draughts of those pleasures, which are at thy right hand, O LORD, for evermore?

9. *For with thee is the fountain of life; in thy light we shall see light.*

The

The rivers before mentioned flow from a "fountain," which fetcheth not supplies from without, but whose spring is within itself, and therefore can never be exhausted. The "water of life" proceeds from "the throne of God and the Lamb." Rev. xxii 1. "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." John xvii. 3. God, like the sun, cannot be seen, but by the light which himself emits.

10. *O continue thy loving kindness unto them that know thee; and thy righteousness to the upright in heart.*

The prophet, groaning under the oppression of the wicked, who are described in the first part of the Psalm, prayeth for a continuation of the mercies of God, which he has celebrated in the second part. Give us, O God, the knowledge of thee, and make us upright in heart, that thy loving kindness and thy righteousness may be our portion for ever.

11. *Let not the foot of pride come against me; and let not the hand of the wicked remove me.*

The Christian has reason enough to join with the prophet in this petition, whether we suppose it to deprecate destruction from proud men and sinners, without us, or from pride and sin, within us.

12. *There are the workers of iniquity fallen: they are cast down, and shall not be able to rise.*

Faith calleth things that be not, as though they were; it carries us forward to the end of time; it shews us the Lord sitting on his throne of judgment; the righteous caught up to meet him in the air; the world in flames under his feet; and the empire of sin fallen, to rise no more.

VII DAY, EVENING PRAYER. PSALM XXXVII.

ARGUMENT.

From the beginning to the end of this Psalm, the Holy Spirit, by the prophet, administreth advice and consolation to the church and people of the Lord, oppressed and afflicted in the world, by prosperous and triumphant wickedness. Faith and patience are therefore recommended, upon the double consideration of that sure reward which awaiteth the righteous, and that certain punishment which shall be inflicted on the wicked. These two events are set before us in a variety of expressions, and under many lively and affecting images. As the Psalm is rather a collection of divine aphorisms on the same subject, than a continued and connected discourse, it admitteth of nothing farther in the way of argument.

1. Fret not thyself because of evil doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. 2. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.

The Holy Spirit here prescribeth a remedy to a very common, and no less dangerous disorder of the mind, namely, a distrust of God's providence occasioned by frequently beholding the prosperity of the wicked, in this present world. He who alloweth himself time to consider, how soon the fairest spring must give place to a burning summer, a blighting autumn, and a killing winter, will no longer envy, but pity the fading verdure of the grass.

grafs, and the ftill more tranfient glories of the flowers of the field. Herbs and plants are Medicinal, in more fenfes than one.*

3. *Trust in the LORD, and do good, fo shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed: or, dwell in the land, and feed on truth, or, faithfulness.*

The confideration of the fpeedy and tragical end of finners affordeth a powerful argument for perfeverance in faith and holinefs; for continuing in the church, and making our abode in the pastures of truth; until in the ftrength of that facred viand, we come to the heavenly land of promise, and dwell therein for ever.

4. *Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.*

He who delighteth in the creature, hath not always "the desires of his heart" granted, nor is it fit that he should have them; but he who delighteth in God, will desire what he delighteth in, and obtain what he desireth.

5. *Commit thy way unto the LORD: trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass.* 6. *And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon day.*

Malice and calumny may, for a time, overshadow the splendor of an holy character; but the sun will come forth, and the clouds will fly away. This was most eminently true of the blessed Jesus, at his resurrection, and will be verified in his saints, at the last day. The history of Sufanna affordeth a remarkable instance of it, in this life. "Her heart trusted in the Lord, and he brought forth her righteousness as the light; infomuch that all the assembly

* See an elegant and beautiful discourse on "the lillies of the field," published among the Sermons of the late learned, ingenious, and worthy Dr Tottie.

bly cried out with a loud voice, and praised God, who saveth them that trust in him." Ver. 35, 60.

7. *Rest in, or, be silent to the LORD, and wait patiently for him; fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in the way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.*

If the spotless Lamb of God was dumb, before those who were divesting him of his honours, and robbing him of his life, "silent" resignation cannot but become one, who suffers for his sins. Israel was commanded to "stand still and see the salvation of God;" but the people gazed upon the pomp and power of Pharaoh, who was in pursuit of them, till their faith failed, and they began to murmur and despond. How often is this our case, before we perceive it.

8. *Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.* 9. *For evil doers shall be cut off; but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.*

At the day of judgment, when "evil doers shall be cut off" by the flaming sword of eternal vengeance, and when the saints of the most High shall "inherit the new earth," the latter will have no emotions of anger or envy against the former. Let them so meditate on that day, as to make it present to their minds, and they will have no such emotions now.

10. *For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be; yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.*

The whole duration of the world itself is but "a little while," in the sight of him, whose hope is full of immortality. But the calamities and deaths of princes; the tragical fate of empires, swept with the besom of destruction; the overthrow of cities, whose dimensions, towers, and palaces once astonished the earth

earth, but whose "place" is now no-where to be found by the most curious and diligent enquirer; and the desolations of the chosen city Jerusalem; all these are even now sufficient to draw forth the tear of commiseration, and to extinguish the kindling spark of envy in every considerate mind.

11. *But the meek shall inherit the earth: and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.*

The "meek" are they, who bear their own adversities, and the prosperity of their enemies, without envy, anger, or complaint. For these there is a possession in the kingdom and city of the prince of "peace," which "the Lord the righteous judge shall give them at that day. Blessed are the meek," saith that Lord and judge himself, "for they shall inherit the earth." Matt. v. 5. "In the meantime, they, and they only, possess the present earth, as they go towards the kingdom of heaven, by being humble, and chearful, and content with what their good God has allotted them. They have no turbulent, repining, vexatious thoughts that they deserve better; nor are vexed, when they see others possessed of more honour, or more riches, than their wise God has allotted for their share. But they possess what they have with a meek and contented quietness; such a quietness as makes their very dreams pleasing, both to God and themselves." Walton's Complete Angler. p. 295.

12. *The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth.* 13. *The LORD shall laugh at him, for he seeth that his day is coming.*

The original enmity between the Wicked One and the Just One will always subsist between the wicked and the just. The rage of the former against the latter is compared to that of mad dogs, or wild beasts; but a day is coming, when all that

rage must be turned and employed against themselves. God, who knoweth this, contemneth their vain efforts; and Christians, who know it, and are under the protection of God, should do the same.

14. *The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as be of upright conversation, or, upright of way.* 15. *Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bow shall be broken.*

The tongue is a “sword,” and a “bow” which shooteth its arrows, even bitter words, against the humble and upright Jesus, and his disciples. But these are not the only weapons that have been drawn against them. How the malice of the Jews returned upon their own heads, no one is ignorant; though few lay it to heart, and consider them as set forth for an example.

16. *A little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked.* 17. *For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholdeth the righteous.*

A little, with the blessing of God upon it, is better than a great deal, with the encumbrance of his curse. His blessing can multiply a mite into a talent, but his curse will shrink a talent to a mite. By him, “the arms of the wicked are broken,” and by him “the righteous are upholden:” so that the great question is, whether HE be with us, or against us; and the great misfortune is, that this question is seldom asked.

18. *The LORD knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever.* 19. *They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.*

The favour of God is, to them that obtain it, a better and an enduring substance, which like the widow's

dow's barrel and cruse, wasteth not in the evil days of famine, nor will fail in that evil day of eternal want, when the foolish virgins shall be calling in vain for oil, and the rich glutton as vainly imploring a drop of water to cool his tongue.

20. *But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs, they shall consume: into smoke shall they consume away.*

The destruction of the wicked is here again set before us, but under a different image, namely, that of a sacrifice. Senseless, as cattle, that are fatted for the altar, they wanton in their prosperity, and nourish their hearts against the day of slaughter. In the mean time, the Almighty is whetting that sword, which nothing can withstand; and those fires are kindling, which shall never be extinguished. See Isa. xxxiv. 6—10.

21. *The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again; but the righteous sheweth mercy and giveth.*

The wicked man, like his leader, the “wicked one,” payeth not those, whose money or abilities he hath occasion to borrow, and to employ in his service; whereas the disciple of Christ, in imitation of his master, not only punctually observeth the rules of justice and equity, but thinketh it “more blessed to give, than to receive.” In like manner, though both are indebted, for every thing, to the bounty of God, the latter maketh all the acknowledgments and returns in his power; while the former never thinketh of making any.

22. *For, or, therefore such as be blessed of him, shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of him, shall be cut off.*

They who are like their merciful and gracious Lord, and who, by their devotion and charity, bless him, are blessed of him; they who are like their

cruel and iniquitous master, and who, by their ungodliness, injustice, and hardheartedness, dishonour their Maker and Redeemer, are cursed of him. To the former therefore it will be said, at the last day, "Come, ye blessed, inherit the kingdom;" to the latter, "Go, ye cursed, into the fire."

23. *The steps of a good man are ordered, Heb. established by the LORD; and he delighteth in his way.* 24. *Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand.*

This was emphatically true of the man Christ, whose steps Jehovah established, and in whose way he delighted; who, "though he fell" by death, yet was raised again by his mighty hand, and outstretched arm. It is true likewise of Christians, whom it should support and comfort, in all dangers and temptations. See, for a parallel, Pf. xci.

25. *I have been young, and now am old: yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread.* 26. *He is ever merciful, and lendeth: and his seed is blessed.*

So far is charity from impoverishing, that what is given away, like vapours emitted by the earth, returns, in showers of blessings, into the bosom of the person who gave it; and his offspring is not the worse, but infinitely the better for it. "The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." Prov. xi. 25. The bread which endureth, as well as that which perisheth, is his; and the blessings of time are crowned with those of eternity.

27. *Depart from evil, and do good, and dwell for evermore.* 28. *For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.* 29. *The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever.*

The

The justice and mercy of God, the rewards which awaiteth the righteous, and the punishments that will, sooner or later, be inflicted on the wicked, are subjects, on which whoever shall frequently meditate, will “depart from evil, and do good.” “Whatsoever thou takest in hand,” saith the wise son of Sirach, “remember the END, and thou shalt never do amiss.” Ecclus. vii. 36.

30. *The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment.* 31. *The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.*

The word which is here, as in other places innumerable, translated “the righteous,” is in the singular number, and might therefore be translated the “Righteous One,” or, “the Just One,” for it is often designed to point him out to us, who is emphatically so stiled; whose “mouth” always “spake wisdom,” in whose “heart was the law of God,” and whose “steps” NEVER declined to evil. Lord, put thy laws into our hearts, that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth may speak; and as the mouth speaks, the hands may act, and the feet may walk.

32. *The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him.* 33. *The LORD will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged.*

The Jews “watched” that “Just One,” daily and hourly; they “sought to slay him,” and did so; but “Jehovah left him not in their hands,” but vindicated his innocence, by raising him from the dead. And the day is coming, when he who hath stood tamely at the bar of men, and hath suffered for truth and righteousness, shall be advanced to a throne among the saints and martyrs, to assist at the trial of his once insulting judges.

34. *Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land; when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it.*

The apostle, writing to the Hebrew converts, under affliction and persecution, thus expresseth the sentiment contained in this verse. "Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry." Heb. x. 35.

35. *I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree, or, a native tree, which has grown from the seed, without transplantation, in the same spot.* 36. *Yet he passed away, and lo, he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.*

The great Babylonian monarch had his own exaltation, and subsequent degradation, pourtrayed to him, in a vision, under this very image, which conveyeth to the mind a most striking and affecting idea of the rise and fall of men and empires, which have now no existence, but in history. "I saw, and behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great. The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of the earth. The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it. I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and behold a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven. He cried aloud, and said thus: Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit; let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from

from his branches." Dan. iv. 10, 21, &c. See the prophet's exposition, 20, 21, &c. and what is said above, on ver. 18. of this Psalm.

37. *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace.* 38. *But the transgressors shall be destroyed together; the end of the wicked shall be cut off.*

After taking a view of those short lived honours, which the world setteth upon the heads of its most favoured votaries, let us turn our eyes to "the perfect and upright One;" let us behold the permanent greatness and the unfading glory of the TREE OF LIFE, which is in the midst of the paradise of God; whose leaves are for the healing of the nations, and whose fruit is the fruit of "peace."

39. *But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD, he is their strength in the time of trouble.* 40. *And the LORD shall help them, and deliver them; he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they put their trust in him.*

Of thee, O Lord Jesus, is our salvation; be thou our strength in this mortal life, which is a time of trouble; help us against our spiritual enemies, and deliver us from them; deliver us from the wicked one, and from all evil; and save us from the guilt and punishment thereof; because we put our trust in thee, and in thee alone.

VIII. DAY. MORNING PRAYER. PSALM XXXVIII.

ARGUMENT.

In this Psalm, which is the third of those stiled Penitential, the sinner, ver. 1. prayeth to be chastened only, and not destroyed; 2—10. describeth the state of his soul under various images, chiefly borrowed from bodily diseases and pains; 11, 12. complaineth

complaineth of his friends forsaking, and his enemies persecuting him; but 13—15. continueth patient and resigned, committing his cause to God, whom 16—22. he beseecheth to help him, on his confession and repentance. As our Lord took upon him the guilt, and suffered the punishment of sin; as there are some passages in the latter part of the Psalm, literally predictive of his passion, and so understood by the best ancient expositors; and as the sinner should be led by his own sorrows to reflect on those of his Redeemer; the meditations of the reader are, therefore, under each particular, directed, by the ensuing comment, into that channel.

1. O LORD, *rebuke me not in thy wrath, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.*

The petition here preferred, as in the sixth Psalm, is, that Jehovah would not condemn, as a judge, but chasten, as a father, for the amendment and preservation of the offender. The same prayer, which we sinners make for ourselves, Christ, who bore our sins, once made for us.

2. *For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore.*

The “arrows,” and the “hand” of God, are his judgments on sin; those internal pangs and terrors which pierce the soul, and those external afflictions and calamities which sink and weigh down the spirits. The holy Jesus, at the time of his passion, received these arrows, and sustained this weight, for the sins of the whole world.

3. *There is no soundness in my flesh, because of thine anger: neither is there any rest, or, peace, or, health, in my bones, because of my sin.*

The expressions in this verse are applicable to the disorders and diseases which sin hath introduced
both

both into the soul and into the body, as the terms, "health," and "sickness," are in Scripture no less frequently employed to describe the state of the former, than that of the latter. If a single sinner thus complaineth of his grief and pain, what must have been the agony and passion of him who suffered for all, mercifully and lovingly submitting to be "made sin for us."

4. *For mine iniquities are gone over my head; as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.*

Sins and sorrows are here, as in many other places, represented under the image of mighty waters rolling incessantly over the head of the person sunk into them, and by their accumulated weight depressing him, so that he can no more rise above them. Let us meditate on that deep and tempestuous ocean, into which we were the means of plunging the innocent Jesus.

5. *My wounds stink and are corrupt, through my foolishness.*

Sin is the wound of the soul, which must be washed with the tears of repentance, cleansed by the blood of Christ, and healed by the Spirit of the Holy One. It requires great care and attention, until the cure be compleated. Otherwise, mortification and death ensue, as in the case of outward wounds, if neglected, or ill managed. See Isai. i. 6. Luke x. 34. All the sores and pains of the body mystical are lamented by him who is the Head of that body, and who felt the sad effects of these corruptions of our nature, in the day of his sufferings.

6. *I am troubled, Heb. writhed, or, distorted, I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long.*

As the body by pain, so the soul by guilt, is "distorted" from its original uprightness; it is "bowed down" to the earth, through shame and fear,

fear, being no longer able to look up towards heaven, with its accustomed holy confidence; and, instead of rejoicing in a good conscience, and the hope of glory, sorrow is its portion, and grief its familiar acquaintance. And what wonder, that we should be humbled and afflicted for our own sins, when the Son of God was so humbled and afflicted for sins not his own?

7. *For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease, or, inflammation; and there is no soundness in my flesh.*

The “disease,” or “inflammation,” complained of, in these metaphorical terms, seems to be the dis-temperature of our fallen nature, whereby it cometh to pass, that “the flesh lusteth against the spirit;” it is that “other law in our members, warring against the law in our minds, bringing us into captivity to the law of sin,” and forcing every son of Adam to cry out—“O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death!” Happy is it for us, that we are enabled to go on with the Apostle, and to “thank God,” that we are delivered, “through Jesus Christ our Lord,” on whom were “laid the iniquities of us all.”

8. *I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart.*

The vigour of a man is broken in pieces, and wasted away, by pain, and the disquietude from thence arising, which cause piercing cries, and loud lamentations. When sin in the soul is felt like sickness in the body, it will produce effects in some degree similar. Let us reflect on the sufferings, the cries, and the tears of our Redeemer.

9. LORD, *all my desire is before thee: and my groaning is not hid from thee.*

The “desires” and “groans” of the penitent are known to God, and marked down in his book; and there

there is no small comfort in thinking and acknowledging that they are so; but much more comfort is there in the remembrance of those inconceivable “desires,” and those unutterable “groanings,” which the holy Jesus poured forth for us in the days of his flesh, and which prevail for the acceptance of our own.

10. *My heart panteth, my strength hath failed me, for the light of mine eyes, it is gone from me.*

In bodily sickness, these are three symptoms of approaching dissolution; and the soul is in great extremity, when the three corresponding symptoms appear upon her; namely, when she hath neither resolution to will, power to perform, nor knowledge to discern the things that belong unto her health and peace.

11. *My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore, or, plague, or, affliction, and my kinsmen, or, my neighbours stand afar off.*

A body afflicted with a noisome distemper, and a soul troubled on account of sin, find but few friends, who have charity enough to stay with, and to minister to them. Let us not be surprised, or offended at this, when we see the righteous Jesus, at his passion, destitute and forsaken by all; as it is written; “Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.” Matt. xxvi. 56. “and all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.” Luke xxiii. 49.

12. *They also that seek after my life, lay snares for me: and they that seek my hurt, speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long.* 13. *But I, as a deaf man, heard not; and I was as a dumb man, that openeth not his mouth.* 14. *Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs, or, altercations.*

These

These verses describe and recommend to our imitation the behaviour of David, and of a greater than David, when under persecution; the former from Absalom, Ahitophel, Shimei, &c. the latter from the chief priests and elders, Judas, and the Jews.

15. *For in thee, O LORD, do I hope, or, thee do I wait for: thou wilt hear, or, answer, O LORD my God.*

This verse assigns the reason why the ill usage, which we receive at the hands of men, should be born with patience and resignation; namely, because, as it is not without the permission, so neither will it be without the notice of the Almighty; who will one day take the matter into his own hands. Christ, saith St Peter, “who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth, yet when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.” 1 Pet. ii. 21.

16. *For I said, Hear me, lest otherwise they should rejoice over me: when my foot slippeth, they magnify themselves against me.*

As the glory of God may be said, in some measure, to depend on the behaviour and fate of his servants; on that account, besides the stings of conscience, temporal punishments, and the danger of eternal torments, good men should ever have before their eyes the dishonour which is brought on the name of God, and the stop which is put to the progress of his Gospel, by the fall of any eminently righteous and holy person into sin.

17. *For I am ready to halt, and my sorrow is continually before me.* 18. *For I will declare mine iniquity: I will be sorry for my sin.*

The surest way to have our weakness strengthened, and our sin forgiven, is to acknowledge and confess both; and this we need not be ashamed to do,

do, when we consider, that he, who is the Lord strong and mighty, took our infirmities; and the king of righteousness bare our sins, in his own body, on the tree.

19. *But mine enemies are lively, and they are strong, and they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied.* 20. *They also that render evil for good are mine adversaries: because I follow the thing that good is.*

These words, joined with the preceding, are applicable to the distress of David, and the prosperity of his adversaries; to the sufferings of Christ, and the triumph of the Jews; to the afflictions of the church, and the gaiety of the world; to the weakness of faith, and the strength of nature. The result of all is this, that salvation cometh of God only, and is to be implored in the following words, which conclude the Psalm.

21. *Forsake me not, O LORD; O my God, be not far from me.* 22. *Make haste to help me, O LORD God of my salvation.*

PSALM XXXIX.

ARGUMENT.

The prophet, in a state of distress and persecution, determineth 1—3. to be watchful and silent, as our blessed Lord also was, before his enemies. 4. He prayeth for a due sense of the shortness of human life; and after meditating 5, 6. on that subject, fixeth all his faith and hope in God, 7. whom he intreateth, but with submission to his will, 8—10. for remission of sin, and alleviation of misery. 11. From a view of the human body wearing away by sickness, he breaketh out 12, 13. into a most fervent and affectionate prayer, which ought to be continually in the mouth of the Christian, upon earth.—This Psalm is with

the utmost propriety appointed by the church to be used at the burial of the dead, as a funeral is indeed the best comment upon it.

1. *I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.*

The Psalm begins abruptly with the result of a meditation on the narrow, slippery, and dangerous paths of life; and, more especially, on the extreme difficulty of restraining the tongue, amidst the continual temptations and provocations of the adversary. In these circumstances, “watchfulness” and “silence” are resolved on, as the only means of security. Let us behold the Lamb of God, as our great pattern and example herein.

2. *I was dumb with silence, I held my peace even from good, and my sorrow was stirred.*

There is a time to keep silence, because there are men who will not hear; there are tempers, savage and sensual, as those of swine, before whom, evangelical pearls, or the treasures of heavenly wisdom, are not to be cast. This consideration stirreth up fresh grief and trouble, in a pious and charitable heart. How much more must it have done so, in the soul of him, who lived and died only for the salvation of sinners.

3. *My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue.*

The fire of divine Charity, thus prevented from diffusing itself, for the illumination and warmth of those around it, and like other fire, rendered more intense by its confinement, presently ascended, in the flame of devotion, toward heaven; while it continued to be fed, and preserved in brightness and vigour, by meditation on the goodness of God, and
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the ingratitude of man; the transient miseries of time, and the durable glories of eternity.

4. LORD, *make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days what it is: that I may know how frail I am.*

Wearied with the contradiction of sinners, and sickening at the prospect of so much wretchedness in the valley of weeping, the soul looks forward to her departure from hence, praying for such a sense of the shortness of human life, as may enable her to bear the sorrows of this world, and excite her to prepare for the joys of a better. “O faithless and perverse “generation,” saith even the meek and patient Jesus himself, “how long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you?” Matt. xvii. 17.

5. *Behold thou hast made my days as an hand breadth, and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best, Heb. settled estate, is altogether vanity.*

The age of man, or that of the world, is but a “span” in dimension, a moment in duration; nay, it is less than both; it is “nothing,” if compared with the unmeasurable extent, and the unnumbered days of eternity: every hour, from that of our birth, brings us so much nearer to our death; nor can we continue, for a second of time, in one stay. “Behold,” then, O Lord, the “vanity” of man; and be so merciful unto him, as to open his eyes, that he may behold it, himself!

6. *Surely, every man walketh in a vain shew, or, in a shadowy image: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.*

This world is, to the other, as a “shadow” to the substance; nay, temporal life, health, riches, honours, and pleasures, can hardly be called shadows of those which are eternal, in point of resemblance; though, for their illusive and fleeting nature, they are shadows indeed. “The mortal

state of man is compounded of light and darknefs; seeming to be something, when really it is nothing; always altering, and ending on a sudden; nearest to disappearing, when at full length; sure to continue no longer than while the sun is above the horizon; but liable to vanish, at the interposition of a cloud; and when it is gone, leaving no track behind it." The fate of riches heaped up by misers, with unutterable care and anxiety, may convince us, how "vainly" men are "disquieted!"

7. *And now, LORD, what wait I for? My hope is in thee.*

The soul, that hath a true sense of the vanity of the creature, will at once fix her thoughts and affections on the Creator. A celebrated writer, describing a man of the world, on his death-bed, hath expressed this sentiment, with wonderful sublimity and elegance — "Whoever would know how much piety and virtue surpass all external goods, might here have seen them weighed against each other, where all that gives motion to the active, and elevation to the eminent; all that sparkles in the eye of hope, and pants in the bosom of suspicion, at once became dust in the balance, without weight, and without regard. Riches, authority, and praise, lose all their influence, when they are considered as riches, which to-morrow shall be bestowed upon another: authority, which shall this night expire for ever; and praise, which, however merited, or however sincere, shall, after a few moments, be heard no more." *

8. *Deliver me from all my transgressions; make me not the reproach of the foolish.*

Affliction hath then had its proper effect, when the sufferer is thereby convinced of sin, and there-
for

fore prayeth for a removal of the latter, as the only way to be delivered from the former. The "reproaches" of the foolish make no inconsiderable article in the account of a Christian's sufferings; and our Lord frequently complaineth of them, in the Psalms, as one of the bitter ingredients of his own cup.

9 *I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.*

Whatever materials compose the rod of affliction, and from whatsoever quarter the stroke cometh, let us remember, that the rod is grasped, and the stroke is inflicted, by the hand of our heavenly Father. To revenge ourselves on the instrument, is folly; to murmur against the agent, is something worse.

10. *Remove thy stroke away from me: I am consumed by the blow of thy hand.*

The Christian, who knows from whence his troubles proceed, knows where to apply, for relief; and having first "petitioned" for remission of sin, ver. 8. he then humbly supplicates for a mitigation of his sorrow. "Father," saith the beloved son of God, "if thou be willing, remove this cup from me." Luke xxii. 42.

11. *When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty, or, all that is delightful, or, desirable in him to consume away like a moth: surely every man is vanity.*

The body of man is as a "garment" to the soul: in this garment sin hath lodged a "moth," which, by degrees, fretteth and weareth away, first, the beauty, then the strength, and, finally, the texture of its parts. Whoever hath watched the progress of a consumption, or any other lingering distemper, nay, the slow and silent devastations of time alone, in the human frame, will need no farther il-

illustration of this just and affecting similitude; but will discern, at once, the propriety of the reflection, which follows upon it—"Surely, every man is vanity!"

12. *Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear unto my cry: hold not thy peace at my tears: for I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.*

Meditation should terminate in devotion; and meditation on human vanity and misery, if indulged as it deserves to be, certainly will do so; it will bring us to our "prayers," our "cries," and our "tears;" and teach us to address the throne of grace, as poor pilgrims in a strange land, who have here no abiding city, but are soon to strike our tents, and be gone for ever. Such was David, though king of Israel; and such was the son of David, in the body of his flesh, though Lord of all things: both were "strangers and sojourners, as all their fathers," Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were before them, and as all their children have been, and shall be, after them, upon the earth.

13. *O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.*

Most fervently and affectionately, therefore, ought the Christian pilgrim to pray, that God would spare his life, and respite the fatal sentence, until all, that hath been decayed through the frailty of nature, be renewed by the power of grace; that his perfect reconciliation with the Almighty may be accomplished, and his plenary pardon sealed in heaven, before he taketh his last farewell of the world, and ceaseth to have an existence in these regions of vanity and sorrow.

PSALM

P S A L M XL.

ARGUMENT.

It is plain, from ver. 6—8. of this Psalm, compared with Heb. x. 5. that the prophet is speaking in the person of Christ, who, 1—5. celebrateth the deliverance wrought for his mystical body, the Church, by his resurrection from the grave, effecting that of his members from the guilt and dominion of sin; for the abolition of which he declareth 6—8. the inefficacy of the legal sacrifices, and mentioned his own incarnation, to do the will of his Father, and 9, 10. to preach righteousness to the world. 11—13. He representeth himself as praying, while under his sufferings, for his own, and his people's salvation; he foretelleth 14, 15. the confusion and desolation of his enemies, and 16. the joy and thankfulness of his disciples and servants; for the speedy accomplishment of which, 17. he preferreth a petition.

1. *I waited patiently for the LORD, and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.*

In this verse we hear the voice of the meek Lamb of God, who, though never sorrow was like unto his sorrow, “waited patiently,” till the time appointed by the Father came, when that sorrow should be turned into joy. Let not his disciples expect to “inherit the promises,” otherwise than “through faith and patience.” Four thousand years, the church, under the patriarchs, the law, and the prophets, waited for the first advent of Messiah; and seventeen hundred years, the church, under the Gospel, hath waited for the second. Jehovah, who inclined himself to the prayers of the former, will also hear the cries of the latter.

2. *He*

2. *He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, Heb. a pit of confused, tumultuous noise, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.*

The sufferings, from which our Redeemer was delivered, are here described under the image of a dark subterraneous cavern, from which there was no emerging, and where roaring cataracts of water broke in upon him, overwhelming him on every side; till, as it is expressed in the xviiiith Psalm, "God sent from above, and took him, and drew him out of many waters." Let us celebrate the deliverance of Christ, as a pledge and earnest of our own rescue from the troubles and temptations of life; from the power of death and the grave; from the "horrible pit, and the miry clay;" when we shall be exalted on "the rock" of our salvation, and our "goings" shall be "established" for ever.

3. *And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our GOD: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.*

Every new deliverance requires "a new song." Christians sing their wonderful redemption, from sin and death, in these holy hymns, which God, by his Spirit, hath put into their mouths, and which, by their application to matters evangelical, are become "new" songs, setting forth the praise and glory of God, through Jesus Christ. And who can hear the church, singing the victory and triumph of her mighty and merciful Saviour, without being incited to "fear," and "to believe?"

4. *Blessed is that man that maketh the LORD his trust: and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.*

He who is sensible how much God hath done, and how little the world can do for him, will earnestly and heartily pronounce the blessedness of the man, who relies upon the real power and goodness
of

of the former, instead of suffering himself to be deceived by the empty parade, and fallacious promises of the latter.

5. *Many, O LORD my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee; if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.*

The counsels and works of the ever-blessed Trinity, planned and executed for the benefit of man, in his creation and preservation, his redemption and sanctification, in order to his resurrection and glorification, through Christ, already risen and glorified, are subjects which can never be exhausted, by the intellectual powers of men or angels; but will, to both, afford matter of incessant meditation, and endless praise. Yet, how little do we meditate on them; how seldom, and how coldly, do we praise God for them!

6. *Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire, mine ears hast thou opened, burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.* 7. *Then said I, lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me.* 8. *I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.*

These words, as the Apostle informeth us, Heb. x. 5. are spoken by Christ, in his own person. In them he proclaims the inefficacy of the legal sacrifices to take away sin, and the divine disapprobation of such sacrifices, when relied on for that purpose. He sets forth his own readiness, to do, and to suffer the will of the Father, implied in the Psalm, by the words—"mine ears hast thou opened;" but more plainly expressed in the Apostle's citation, by the paraphrase, "a body hast thou prepared me;"*

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* For the expression, "Mine ears hast thou opened," seems equivalent to—"Thou hast made me obedient." Thus Isai. l. 5.
"The

He refers to the predictions concerning Messiah, in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, which is here stiled—"the volume, or, roll of the book." He declares the pleasure he had in doing the Father's will, or in accomplishing the law; which had taken possession of all his powers and faculties; having been admitted by the understanding, retained in the memory, and rendered operative in the will. "I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart."

9. *I have*

"The Lord God hath opened mine ears, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters," &c. The LXX, perhaps, meant to interpret this symbolical expression, when they rendered it by *σωμα κατηρτισα μοι*, "Thou hast prepared," or, "fitted my body," that is, to be "obedient," and to "do thy will." See Dr Jackson, Vol. II. p. 882. This seems to be the best sense of the present reading, and is well expressed by Mr Merrick, in his poetical version:

Nor sacrifice thy love can win,
Nor offerings from the stain of sin
Obnoxious man shall clear:
Thy hand my mortal frame prepares,
(Thy hand, whose signature it bears,)
And opes my willing ear.

Mr Pierce of Exeter proposed a conjectural alteration of the word אוניס "ears," into the two words אז ברה "then a body," &c. in which case, a learned friend suggests, ברית must likewise be altered to כלית "hast thou prepared, or finished." Bishop Lowth wishes to adopt Mr Pierce's emendation, in order to render the original conformable to St Paul's citation from the LXX. And I must confess, if the Apostle's argument turned on the word *σωμα*, such an emendation might seem necessary. It is true, *σωμα Χριστου* occurs in the succeeding verse; but I think it not essential to the argument, which seems to stand clear and full, whatever be the meaning of *σωμα κατηρτισα μοι*—"When he said, Sacrifice, &c. thou wouldst not—then he said, Lo, I come, to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second." The author of the anonymous notes in Mr Merrick's Annotations, I find, is of this opinion. "It is not certain that the Apostle argues from the word *σωμα* at all. He quotes the translation of the LXX, as he found it in his copy; lays a stress on what is in the Hebrew, but none on the rest; either knowing it not to be there, or being restrained, by the Spirit of God, from making use of it." See Appendix to Merrick's Annotat. p. 294.

9. *I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest.*
 10. *I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart, I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation; I have not concealed thy loving kindness and thy truth from the great congregation.*

As the preceding verses described the priestly office of our Lord; in the execution of which, he offered himself, and his all-perfect obedience, for us; so, in the passage now before us, he declares himself to have acted up to the prophetic part of his character, by “preaching” the doctrines of truth, righteousness, and salvation, to the people, without concealing aught, through negligence, fear, or favour. Happy the minister of Christ, who, on his death-bed, is able to say the same.

11. *Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O LORD; let thy loving kindness and thy truth alway preserve me.*

The beloved Son of God here prayeth for the continuation of that mercy, and the accomplishment of those gracious promises, to his body, the church, which made the subjects of his heavenly discourses, in the days of his flesh. Such ought to be the subjects of our discourses, and of our prayers.

12. *For innumerable evils have compassed me about; mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up: they are more than the hairs of mine head, therefore my heart faileth me.*

If these words, as well as the foregoing, are supposed to be spoken by our Lord, (and indeed there doth not appear to be any change of person) they must be uttered by him, considering himself (for so the primitive writers suppose him, in the Psalms, frequently to consider himself) as still suffering in his body mystical, the church; and lamenting, as
 head

head, both the transgressions and the afflictions of the members, accomplishing their warfare in the world. Thus much, at least, we know, that, after his ascension, when the members were persecuted on earth, the head complained from heaven, as sensible of the pain. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou ME?" Some critics think the word *עָלַי* in the text, may be translated "my punishment." But the author of the Anonymous notes, mentioned below, observes, that "all punishments, properly speaking, presuppose sin; and especially, when they are represented, as here, to overtake and seize a person. Therefore, to understand this of Christ, it must be interpreted of imputed sins, or punishments for them." Merrick's Annotat. p. 295.

13. *Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me: O LORD, make haste to help me.*

This short, but forcible prayer, for help and deliverance, in God's good time, and according to his good pleasure, continues, and must continue to be the prayer of the church, and of all her children, until the day of final redemption.

14. *Let them, or, they shall be ashamed and confounded together, that seek after my soul to destroy it; let them, or, they shall be driven backward, and put to shame, that wish me evil.* 15. *Let them, or, they shall be desolate for a reward of their shame, that say unto me, aha, aha.*

The shame, confusion, and desolation to be brought on the Jews by the resurrection, exaltation, and power of him, whose blood they thirsted after, and whom they mocked and insulted, when in his last agonies on the cross, are here foretold; and the prophecy hath been punctually fulfilled. But a more horrible confusion and desolation awaiteth them, and all other impenitent sinners, at the future

ture revelation of the righteous judgment of God; when vengeance must destroy those, whom mercy cannot reclaim. And, to this ultimate issue of things, the church directeth her views.

16. *Let all those that seek thee, or, all those that seek thee shall rejoice and be glad in thee; let such as love thy salvation, or, such as love thy salvation shall say continually, the LORD be magnified.*

As the last verses predicted the calamities, which should befall the enemies of Messiah, this describeth the unfeigned joy and gladness, springing up in the hearts of such as love the salvation of Jesus, and evermore magnify his holy name in the church, for the blessings of redemption, “eating their meat,” as the first Christians are said to have done, “with gladness, and singleness of heart, praising God.” Acts ii. 46.

17. *But I am poor and needy, yet the LORD thinketh upon me: thou art my help and my deliverer, make no tarrying, O my God.*

The church, like her Redeemer, is often poor and afflicted in this world, but Jehovah thinketh upon her, and is solicitous for her support; she is weak and defenceless, but Jehovah is her help and her deliverer. With such a Father, and such a Friend, poverty becometh rich, and weakness itself is strong. In the mean time, let us remember, that he who once came in great humility, shall come again in glorious majesty. “Make no tarrying, O our God; but Come, Lord Jesus, Come quickly.” Rev. xxii. 20.

VIII DAY. EVENING PRAYER. PSALM XLI.

ARGUMENT.

The application made of the 9th verse of this Psalm, John xiii. 18. sheweth, that the prophet is speak-

ing in the person of Messiah. 1—3. He declareth the blessedness of the man that considereth the poor; 4. he prayeth for mercy and favour; 5—9. describeth the behaviour of his adversaries, and of one person in particular; 10. petitioneth for deliverance; 11, 12. rejoiceth in hope; and 13. breaketh out into thanksgiving.

1. *Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble. Heb. in the day of evil.*

As Christ considered us, in our state of poverty, so ought we most attentively to consider him, in his; to consider what he suffered in his own person; to discern him suffering in his poor afflicted members; and to extend to them the mercy which he extended to us. He, who was “blessed” of Jehovah, and “delivered in the evil day,” by a glorious resurrection, will “bless” and “deliver,” in like manner, such as, for his sake, love and relieve their brethren.

2. *The LORD will preserve and keep him alive, or, revive him, and he shall be blessed upon the earth; and thou wilt not deliver him into the will of his enemies.*

The compassionate and charitable disciple of the holy Jesus is often wonderfully “preserved,” and rendered prosperous, even in this world; but his greatest comfort is, that, like his Master, he shall one day be “revived,” to inherit the “blessing,” in a better country, where no “enemy” can approach to hurt or molest him.

3. *The LORD will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing; thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.*

An exemption from sorrow and sickness is not promised to the children of God; but strength and comfort are given unto them, from above, to support and carry them through their trials; and they, who,

who, in the days of their health, have, by their alms, given rest to the bodies, or, by their counsels, restored peace to the consciences of others, shall have the bed of pain made easy under them, by the hand of their heavenly Father.

4. *I said, LORD, be merciful unto me ; heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee.*

Every son of Adam may, and ought, in these words, to acknowledge his sin, and to intreat for mercy and grace, to heal the disorders of his nature. If we suppose Messiah ever to have uttered this verse in his devotions, as we know he applied the 9th verse to his own case, it is obvious, that he must be understood to confess the sins, not of his own righteous person, but of the nature he had assumed, in order to cleanse and purify it, by his sufferings. See below, Ps. xl. 12.

5. *Mine enemies speak evil of me ; when shall he die, and his name perish ?*

Here we may undoubtedly consider the poor and lowly Jesus, in the day of his humiliation, when he was daily and hourly calumniated by his adversaries; when, restless and impatient at beholding him still alive, they said—"What do we, for this man doth many miracles? If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him? Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold the world is gone after him:" John xi. 47. xii. 19. and when, grown more furious and clamorous, they cried, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him, crucify him." How many, with the same bitterness of spirit, "speak evil" continually of his doctrines, his church, his ordinances, and his ministers; in effect, saying, "When shall he die, and his name perish?"

6. *And if he come to see me, he speaketh vanity : his heart gathereth iniquity to itself ; when he goeth abroad, he telleth it.*

Thus the enemies of Christ “sent out spies, who should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor.” Luke xx. 20. Thus Judas sat down at the last supper, all the while meditating the destruction of his Master; till at length, rising from table, and going abroad, he put his design in execution: and thus the mystical body of Christ, frequently suffers, as his natural body once did, by means of hypocrites and traitors.

7. *All that hate me whisper together against me: against me do they devise my hurt.* 8. *An evil disease, say they, Heb. a word, or, matter of Belial, namely, the crime charged upon him, cleaveth fast unto him: and now that he lieth, he shall rise up no more.*

The whispers of the Pharisees, the counsels of the Sanhedrim, and their taunts and scoffs at the blessed Jesus, when, on the cross, “numbered with the transgressors,” nor ever expected to “arise” again from the dead, are here most significantly and plainly pointed out. The same weapons are frequently employed against the servants of Christ; but let them not be, on that account, discouraged from following their Master.

9. *Yea mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lift up his heel against me.*

“I speak not of you all,” saith our Lord to his disciples; “I know whom I have chosen: but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me, hath lift up his heel against me.” John xiii. 18. The sufferings of the church, like those of her Redeemer, generally begin at home: her open enemies can do her no harm, until her pretended friends have delivered her into their hands: and

and, unnatural as it may seem, they, who have waxed fat upon her bounty, are sometimes the first to "lift up the heel" against her.

10. *But thou, O LORD, be merciful unto me, and raise me up, that I may requite them, or, and I shall requite them.*

The holy Jesus here maketh his prayer unto the Father, for the accomplishment of the promised resurrection, and foretelleth the righteous judgment that would be executed on his enemies, after their rejection of the gracious offers made them, by the Apostles, in his name, notwithstanding all that they had said and done against him. Then the kingdom of God was taken from them, and their house was left unto them desolate. The hour is coming, when the church shall arise to glory, and all her enemies shall be confounded.

11. *By this I know thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me.* 12. *And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever.*

The Christian, like his Master, must expect sorrow and tribulation, but he is not thereby deprived of the "favour" of heaven; his spiritual enemies, whatever trouble they may give him, yet do not "triumph" over him; he is preserved in his "integrity," and his reward will be the "vision" of God. For the exaltation, therefore, of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of all believers, in, by, and through him,

13. *Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen.*

PSALM XLII.

ARGUMENT.

David, by Absalom's rebellion, driven from Jerusalem, to the country beyond Jordan, is there

supposed to have endited this Psalm; which, as it is applicable to the case of our Lord, in his state of sojourning and suffering on earth, for our sins; as also, that of the church, under persecution, or that of any member thereof, when deprived of the opportunities of public worship; so doth it, in the most beautiful and pathetical strains, describe the vicissitudes of joy and sorrow, of hope and despondency, which succeed each other in the mind of the Christian pilgrim, while, exiled from the Jerusalem above, he suffereth affliction and tribulation in this valley of tears. The last is the application chiefly made in the comment, as it is the most general and useful one; the others naturally offer themselves, being coincident with, or subordinate to it.

1. *As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.*

The thirst, which the "hart" experienceth, when chased, in sultry weather, over the dusty plains, is here set before us, as a representation of that ardent desire after the waters of eternal comfort, which the temptations, the cares, and the troubles of the world produce in the believing soul. Happy they, who feel this desire, and fly to the well of life, that it may be satisfied. "Blessed are they that thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Matt. v. 6.

2. *My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?*

Whoever considers what it is to "appear before God;" to behold the glorious face of Jesus; to contemplate a beauty which never fadeth; to be enriched by a beneficence which can never be exhausted, and blessed in a love unmerited and infinite; will find abundant reason to say, again and again, "My soul thirsteth after God;" why is the
time

time of my banishment prolonged; when shall the days of my pilgrimage have an end; “when shall I come and appear before God?”

3. *My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God.*

So long as the soul finds herself absent from him whom she loveth, sorrow is still her portion, as well in the day of worldly prosperity, as in the night of adversity. And this sorrow is greatly aggravated by the taunts of the enemy; who, because the promise is delayed, and she suffereth affliction in the mean season, ridiculeth and insulteth her faith and hope, as vain and groundless; intimating, that God hath forsaken her, and tempting her to renounce her principles.

4. *When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me; for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy day.*

As the royal prophet, when driven from Jerusalem by Absalom, was melted into tears at the comparison of his destitute and forlorn situation with his former glory and happiness, when, upon some joyous festival, with all his subjects about him, he had attended the service of the tabernacle, in the city of God; so the Christian pilgrim cannot but bewail his exile from the heavenly Jerusalem, out of which sin hath driven him, and doomed him to wander, for a while, in the vale of misery. Led, by repentance and faith, to look back to the place from whence he is fallen, he sighs after the unspeakable joys of the celestial Zion; longing to keep a festival, and celebrate a jubilee in heaven; to join in the songs of angels, and bear a part in the music of hallelujahs.

5. *Why*

5. *Why art thou cast, or, bowed down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help, or, salvation of his countenance.*

The holy mourner now expostulates with his soul, for suffering herself to sink into a kind of despondency, on account of her afflictions, and the insolent triumph of the adversary; and, as a sovereign cordial for melancholy, prescribes “faith” in God, which will shew the morning of salvation dawning, after the night of calamity shall have run its course; a night, which cannot be long, and may be very short. When the sun arises, we cannot be without light; when God turns his countenance towards us, we cannot be without “salvation.”

6. *O my GOD, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Harmonites, from the hill Mitzar,—or, the little hill.*

The soul, although exhorted in the last verse, to “put her trust in God,” yet, considering her own infirmity, still continueth to be dejected: the prophet, therefore, confesseth as much; and maketh his complaint to God, from whom alone he expecteth comfort; and whom he did not forget, while, far from the sanctuary, he wandered up and down in the country beyond Jordan, whither he had fled from the face of Absalom. This world is, to us, that “country beyond Jordan;” Lord, make us to “remember” thee, under all the afflictions and tribulations we meet with therein, until restored to thy Jerusalem, we shall praise thee in heaven, for the mercies experienced upon earth.

7. *Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy water spouts; all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.*

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The prophet describeth the troubles which successively came upon him, by the vengeance of heaven, from above, “raising up evil against him, out of his own house” and kingdom, from beneath, according to the prediction of Nathan. 2 Sam. xii. 11. The ideas seem to be borrowed from the general deluge, or, from a storm at sea, when, at the “soud” of descending “water spouts,” or torrents of rain, the depths are stirred up, and put into horrible commotion; the clouds above calling, as it were, to the waters below, and one wave encouraging and exciting another, to join their forces, and overwhelm the despairing sufferer*. The whole compass of creation affordeth, not, perhaps, a more just and striking image of the nature and number of those calamities, which sin hath brought upon the children of Adam†.

8. Yet *the LORD will command his loving kindness in the day time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.*

The gloomy prospect begins again to brighten, by a ray of hope shooting through it; and the prophet returneth to his rest and confidence in the mercy of God; determining, not only to give him thanks in the day of prosperity, but, as Paul and Silas afterwards did, to sing his praises at midnight, in adversity and affliction.

9. I

* Thus, as the learned Merrick observes, one river, in Homer, “calls upon another,” to assist in overwhelming the Grecian hero. And, in Æschylus, the fire and sea are said to “swear together,” and to give each other their “pledge of confederacy,” against the Grecian army.

† Since this was written, I find the author of “Observations on divers passages of Scripture,” agreeing entirely with me in the notion, that David is here describing those water spouts, and storms at sea, which were common on the Jewish coast, as we learn from Dr Shaw. Observations, p. 324. 1st edit. So Mr Merrick likewise, in his Annotations.

9. *I will say unto God my rock, why hast thou forgotten me? Why go I mourning, because of the oppression of the enemy?* 10. *As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me: while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?*

He ventureth, notwithstanding, meekly and humbly, upon the strength of the promises, to expostulate with him, who was the “rock” of his salvation, as to his seeming destitution, while continually oppressed and insulted by the cutting reproaches of the adversary. See above, ver. 3. These might be thought to render it in some sort necessary, for God to arise, and vindicate his own honour, by the protection and deliverance of his servant. The Psalmist concludes with that exhortation to his soul, to trust in God, and to wait for his salvation, which makes the mournful chorus of this beautiful Psalm.

11. *Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.* See above, ver. 5.

P S A L M XLIII.

ARGUMENT.

This Psalm seemeth to be a continuation of the former, written by David in the same circumstances, on the same subject, and closing with the same chorus.

1. *Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly, or, unmerciful nation; O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man.*

David, in the same situation as before, appealeth to God, against a people who had driven their sovereign from his capital, to wander, like a fugitive and vagabond, in the remotest parts of his dominions;

ons; against the hypocrisy of Absalom, and the villainy of Ahitophel. The son of David may be supposed to make the same appeal against the same nation, for their far more cruel, treacherous, and iniquitous usage of him, their King and their God. And the words suit the circumstances of an oppressed church, or an injured prince, of all who suffer for truth and righteousness sake, or who groan under the tyranny of their spiritual enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil.

2. *For thou art the God of my strength, why dost thou cast me off; Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?* See above, Ps. xlii. 9. 3. *O send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead me, let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles.*

The chief desire of the Christian, analogous to that of the prophet in distress, is to be saved from sin, as well as sorrow; to be instructed in the way of righteousness, by the "light" of heavenly wisdom, shining in the face of Jesus Christ; to see the accomplishment of the promises, in him who is the "truth;" and to be "led," by this light and this truth, from the land of his pilgrimage, to the "holy hill," and the "mansions" of the just, in the new Jerusalem.

4. *Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy, or, the gladness of my joy; yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God, my God.*

The royal prophet, upon his restoration to his throne, was to sacrifice, on the altar of his God, with the voice of thanksgiving, and to celebrate his mighty deliverer, in a new song upon the melodious harp. The Christian, in like manner, foresees a day coming, when sorrow and fighting shall be no more; and when he and his brethren are to be "made kings and priests;" when they are to reign
with

with their Redeemer for ever; and, upon their golden harps, tuned to an unison with those of angels, to sing his everlasting praises in the courts of the heavenly temple. Therefore,

5. *Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.* See above, Pf. xlii. 5.

IX. DAY. MORNING PRAYER. PSALM XLIV.

ARGUMENT.

In this Psalm we hear the voice of the church, under persecution, 1—3. recounting the mercies of God vouchsafed to his servants of old time; 4—8. declaring her confidence, that she shall experience the same in her present distress, and shall at length overcome, through the power of her Redeemer; for that, notwithstanding her seeming desertion, and manifold sufferings, 9—16. there is still a faithful remnant, 17—22. of those who have not bowed the knee to Baal, and who cease not 23—26. to cry unto God for mercy and deliverance.

1. *We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what works thou didst in their days, in the times of old.*

The works wrought of old, by the arm of Jehovah, for the salvation of his people, are recorded by the Spirit in the Scriptures of truth, that “through patience and comfort of those Scriptures,” as the Apostle expresses it, the church and people of God, whensoever oppressed and afflicted, in any age or country, “may have hope,” that the same God will exert the same power in their behalf. And great is the light, great is the consolation, which
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the sacred history, when thus applied, will always afford to the troubled mind.

2. *How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them; how thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out.*

If the dispossession of the Canaanites, and the establishment of the house of Jacob in their land, furnished the distressed church of Israel with sufficient ground for confidence; how much force hath the argument since received, by the accomplishment of what was then typified; by the victories of the true Joshua, or Jesus; by the fall of paganism, and the plantation of the Christian faith in its stead?

3. *For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them; but thy right hand and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them.*

As it sufficiently appears, that the settlement of Israel in the promised land was the work of God, from the miraculous fall of Jericho; from the prolongation of the day, at the word of Joshua; from the slaughter of the enemy by hailstones from heaven; &c. &c. so was it the first thing which an Israelite was in duty bound to acknowledge, if he hoped for more mercies at the hand of God. The Christian, in like manner, begins and ends all his prayers with an humble and thankful acknowledgement of the free mercy of God in Jesus Christ; confessing, that he "got not" his title to salvation, nor should enter into the possession of it, by "his own" power or merit, but by "the right hand and the arm of his Redeemer, and the light of his countenance, because he had a favour unto him."

4. *Thou art my King, O God, command deliverances for Jacob.*

In these words, the church sums up her argument; as if she had said, O thou, who, going forth before thy people, hast so often and so wonderfully wrought salvation of old time, I still acknowledge thee as my King, able and willing to save; O manifest yet again thy power, yet again let me experience thy mercy. Behold, all things are at thy command; all events are at thy disposal. O gracious Saviour, let all work together for good, to her whom thou lovest.

5. Through thee will we push down our enemies; through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us.

The people of God, however persecuted by the powers of the world, here declare, that their faith faileth not; that the adversary cannot take from them their holy confidence in God, through whom, and in whose saving name, wherever he shall think fit to hear their prayers, and to appear in their cause, they doubt not of obtaining a final victory, and celebrating a glorious triumph, over all their enemies, terrestrial and infernal. Such should be the hope of every afflicted soul.

6. For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me. 7. But thou hast saved us from our enemies, and hast put them to shame that hated us. 8. In God we boast all the day long: and praise thy name for ever.

In spiritual, as well as temporal warfare, the appointed means are to be used, but not "trusted in;" man is to fight, but God giveth the victory; and to him must be ascribed the praise, and the power, and the glory; that, as it is written, "He who glorieth, may glory in the Lord." And thus the Christian church daily singeth, after the example of her blessed and holy representative, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour."

9. But

9. *But thou hast cast us off: and put us to shame; and goest not forth with our armies.*

The church, having declared her confidence, founded on the former mercies of God vouchsafed unto her, proceedeth now to describe her pitiable state under persecution, when the protection of the Almighty seemed, for a season, to be withdrawn, so that she was no longer able to stand before her enemies.

10. *Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy; and they which hate us spoil for themselves.*

The first consequence of a victory gained by the enemies over the friends of the church, is rapine and sacrilege; the invasion of her patrimony, and the plunder of her revenues; allured by the prospect of which, robbery hath sometimes entered into the sanctuary, under the mask of reformation.

11. *Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat: and hast scattered us among the heathen.*

The second calamity which is permitted to fall on the church, in the day of adversity, is that her people are doomed to sudden and cruel deaths by sanguinary edicts. A third calamity is that of their being driven, in times of persecution, from their native country, to wander among strangers and aliens, or among those in whose communion it is judged unlawful to join.

12. *Thou sellest thy people for nought, and dost not increase thy wealth by their price.*

A fourth misery incident to the people of God, when under persecution, is, that he permits them to be held cheap and vile, and to be sold into slavery by their enemies, for little, or nothing; a situation far more to be dreaded than the sword of the executioner.

13. *Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and a derision to them that are round about us.* 14. *Thou makest us a by-word among the heathen; a shaking of the head among the people.* 15. *My confusion is continually before me, and the shame of my face hath covered me:* 16. *For the voice of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth: by reason of the enemy and avenger.*

The fifth and last bitter fruit of persecution is, that thereby the name, and truth, and church, and people of God, are exposed to the insolent and blasphemous scoffs and jeers of infidels; nor is there any circumstance to a pious soul more grievous and afflictive than this.

17. *All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant.* 18. *Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way;* 19. *Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death.*

It is certain that God is provoked by the sins of a church, to let loose the fury of the oppressor upon her. This is acknowledged by Daniel in his prayer; ch. ix. by the three children in the furnace; Song, ver. 5, 6. by the Maccabean martyrs, suffering under Antiochus; 2 Macc. vii. 18. and by Cyprian, and others, in the primitive times. It is not less certain, that no mere man can say, he is free from transgression. The verses, now under consideration, are not, therefore, spoken by the whole church, but by the faithful remnant; nor do they imply an exemption from all sin, but a steadfast perseverance in the profession of God's true religion, from which it is the aim of persecution to seduce, or to force them. The malice of the tormentors is here compared to the venom of "serpents;" and the state of a suffering church to the gloom of "death" itself. Happy the soul, that,
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in the extremity of affliction, can, with humble confidence, thus make her appeal to God, as having held fast her integrity against all the efforts made to wrest it from her, and not having suffered the blasts of adverse fortune, by wearing out patience, to part her from the anchor of faith.

20. If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange God; 21. Shall not God search this out? For he knoweth the secrets of the heart.

The consideration, that "God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things," 1 John iii. 20. ought to be strongly impressed on our minds at all times; but more particularly, when we are tempted by the world (as, one way or other, we all frequently are) to deny our Master, either by word, or deed; and when we have occasion to call heaven to witness our uprightness, under such temptation.

22. Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.

The sufferings of the martyrs were a sufficient proof that they had not yielded to the temptations of the enemy. St Paul, Rom. viii. 36. cites this verse as predictive of the persecutions then beginning to be raised against the Christians. All may apply it to themselves, who are in circumstances of the same nature: and persecution is generally consistent with itself, contriving, by some means or other, to be rid of those who stand in its way. It is a storm, before which all must either bend, or be broken.

23. Awake, why sleepest thou, O LORD? Arise, cast us not off for ever. 24. Wherefore hidest thou thy face? and forgettest our affliction, and our oppression?

There is a time, when the triumphs of the adversary, and the afflictions of the church, tempt men to think, that the eye of Providence is closed,

or turned away, and that the Almighty hath ceased to remember their sad estate. But the truth is, that God only giveth his people an opportunity of feeling their own insufficiency; and waiteth, till, by fervent and importunate prayer, they solicit his help. For so the holy Jesus slept, while the ship was covered with the waves; until, awakened by the cries of his disciples, he arose to their assistance, and spoke the tempest into a perfect calm.

25. For our soul is bowed down to the dust, our belly cleaveth unto the earth.

They who are not brought into this state of humiliation, by outward sufferings, should bring themselves into it, by inward mortification, and self-denial, by contrition and abasement, if they would put up such prayers, as the majesty of heaven will deign to accept, and answer; if they would repeat, with our church, in the spirit of the litany, the concluding verse of this Psalm—

26. Arise for our help, and redeem us for thy mercies' sake!

PSALM XLV.

ARGUMENT.

In this Psalm, which is one of those appointed to be used on Christmas day, the prophet, after 1. proposing his subject, proceeds to celebrate King Messiah, 2. for his spiritual beauty, and eloquence; 3, 4, 5. his power and victories; 6. his throne and sceptre; 7. his righteousness and inauguration; 8. his royal robes, and glorious palace. 9. The Church is introduced as his Spouse; her appearance and dress are described; 10, 11, 12. it is foretold, that the nations shall bring their offerings to her; 13, 14, 15. her attire, her presentation to Christ, with her attendant train, and the

the universal joy and gladness, occasioned by the solemnization of the nuptials, are set forth. 16. The prophet predicteth the fruits of this divine union, and 17. the use that should be made of his sacred epithalamium by the faithful, from generation to generation.

1. *My heart is inditing, Heb. boileth, or, bubbleth up, a good matter, or, the good word. I speak of the things which I have made touching the King. My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.*

“The Spirit of the Lord,” saith David elsewhere, 2 Sam. xxiii. 2. “spake by me, and his word was in my tongue.” In like manner, we are to conceive the prophet here to be full of the divine Spirit, which inspired him with “the good word,” or the glad tidings of salvation. The sacred fire, inclosed in his heart, expanded itself within, till at length it brake forth with impetuosity, to enlighten and to revive mankind with this glorious prediction “touching the King,” Messiah; and this was uttered by his tongue, under the guidance of the spirit, as, in writing, the pen is directed by the hand that holds it.

2. *Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.*

After a short introduction, the prophet stays not to enter regularly upon the subject, in the formal way of narration; but, as if he saw the Divine Person, whom he was about to celebrate, standing before him, he breaks out in extatic admiration of the second Adam, so different from all the descendants of the first! Compounded of a soul fair above all created spirits, and a body pure and perfect, and now brighter than the meridian sun; being invested with the unutterable effulgence of the Divine Nature. Next to the spiritual beauty of Messiah,
the

the prophet is astonished (as those who heard him speak, in the days of his flesh, afterwards were) at "the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth," Luke iv. 22. through the "grace poured into his lips." Such honey and milk were under his tongue, so delightful and salutary was his doctrine, that even his enemies found themselves obliged to confess, "never man spake like this man." John vii. 46. His word instructed the ignorant, resolved the doubtful, comforted the mourners, reclaimed the wicked, silenced his adversaries, healed diseases, controlled the elements, and raised the dead. Therefore hath the father loved, and exalted, and blessed him for evermore.

3. *Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty: with thy glory and thy majesty.*

The prophet, having described the beauty and the eloquence of the King, proceedeth now to set forth his power, and to arm him, as a warrior, for the battle. The "sword" of Messiah is his Word, which, in the language of St Paul, is said to be "quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword;" and is represented by St John, as "a sharp two edged, sword," coming out of the mouth" of Christ. Heb. iv. 12. Rev. i. 19. With this weapon he prevailed, and thereby made his "glory and majesty" to be known throughout the world.

4. *And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of, for the sake of truth, and meekness, and righteousness: and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible, or, wonderful things.**

Messiah

* The sense perhaps may be this: Thy right hand, by its promptness to encounter danger, shall bring thee acquainted with terrible things: thy right hand shall know its office: by habitual exercise, shall render thee expert in war; and lead thee on from conquest to conquest." MERRICK.

Messiah is in these words magnificently described, as making his progress among the nations, seated in his triumphal chariot, adorned with all the regal virtues, atchieving the most astonishing victories, and, by the irresistible might of his power, subduing idolatry and iniquity to the faith and temper of the Gospel.

5. *Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies ; whereby the people fall under thee.*

The prophet goes on to represent Messiah as a warrior, compleatly armed, and skilful in the use of every weapon. Thus a prince is portrayed, Rev. xi. 2. "I saw, and behold a white horse, and he that sat on him had a bow, and a crown was given unto him ; and he went forth conquering, and to conquer." The conquests of Messiah are either those of his word over sin, or those of his arm over the persecuting powers.

6. *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever : the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre.*

The battle being fought and the victory gained, we are called to the consideration of the "throne" and "sceptre" of King Messiah, whom the prophet addresseth, as God. His throne is distinguished from the thrones of this world, by its endless duration ; his sceptre from the sceptres of earthly potentates, by the unerring rectitude of its administration.

7. *Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness : therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness, above thy fellows.*

The sermons, the example, and above all, the death of Christ, for the expiation of sin, demonstrated his love of righteousness, and hatred of wickedness ; and "because he humbled himself, and became obedient even to the death of the cross, therefore God highly exalted him ;" Phil. ii. 8, 9.

and

and he was "anointed" to the kingdom, "with the Holy Ghost, and with power" immeasurable; to the intent that he might bestow, in due proportion, the gifts of heaven on those, whom he is not ashamed to call "friends," and "brethren." And these gifts he did bestow on them, by the emission of the Spirit, soon after his ascension and inauguration. See the application of these two last verses to Christ, Heb. i. 8.

8. *All thy garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces,* whereby they have made thee glad.*

From the throne, the sceptre, and the inauguration, the prophet passes on to the robes and palaces of the King of glory, declaring, that as the perfumed garments of an earthly prince scatter through all the royal apartments a grateful fragrance, so from the glorious vestments of our High priest and King is diffused the sweet favour of his heavenly graces, filling those happy regions of joy and gladness, where he keeps his residence above, and, by the communication of the Spirit, refreshing the faithful on earth, with their odours.

9. *King's daughters were among thy honourable women, or, the splendour of thy train; upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.*

Such being the divine beauty and heavenly glory of the blessed Person, whose nuptials the prophet is now proceeding to describe, it is no wonder that, upon hearing of his fame, innumerable converts, forsaking the vanities even of courts and kingdoms, should follow him, ambitious to have the honour of composing his train; which in reality was the case, upon the publication of the Gospel. And lo, at "the right hand" of the King, followed by this magnificent

* That is, palaces adorned, or inlaid with ivory; as "Ebur atria vestit." *Lucan* x. 119. *MERRICK*.

magnificent procession, appears the Church, the Spouse of the Lamb, arrayed in the garments of righteousness and salvation, fitly compared, for their inestimable value, and radiant brightness, to “the gold of Ophir.”

10. *Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house.*

11. *So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him.*

This seemeth to be the voice of God, addressing the church, to the following effect—O thou, whom I have begotten unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, and whom I have called out of the world, to become “the Lamb’s wife,” hearken diligently to my voice, consider attentively what I say, and be obedient to my direction; thou art now entering into a new state; let old things pass away; regard no more thy connections with earth; but let the love, and if possible, the very memory of thy former condition, be obliterated from thy mind; let all the things belonging to the flesh die in thee: then shalt thou be truly acceptable and dear in his sight, who having purchased and betrothed thee to himself, justly claims thy whole heart, thy undivided love, and thy unlimited service and adoration.

12. *And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift, even the rich among the people shall intreat thy favour.*

The accession of the Gentiles, with their offerings and donations, to the church, is here predicted, under the name of “Tyre,” a city in the neighbourhood of Palestine, formerly the glory of the nations, and mart of the world. See Is. lx. and Rev. xxi.

13. *The King's daughter is all glorious within: her cloathing is of wrought gold.*

The

The church, in different respects, is sometimes called the spouse, sometimes the sister, and often, as here, the “daughter of the heavenly King;” the connection, formed between them, uniting in itself every relation, and every affection. Her beauty, so greatly desired and delighted in by Messiah, is spiritual; it is the beauty of holiness; and her cloathing is “the righteousness of saints.” 1 Pet. iii. 3. Rev. xix. 8.

14. *She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needle work; or, embroidery; the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee.*

The different graces of the faithful, all wrought in them by the same Spirit, compose that divine “embroidery,” which adorns the wedding garment of the church, who is therein presented to the King, attended by her bride maids, after the nuptial manner. These are either the single churches, or holy souls, that accede to, and accompany the spouse; unless we suppose, as some do, that the Bride is the Israelitish church, and then the attendants will represent the Gentiles.

15. *With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the King's palace.*

The solemnization of this marriage between Christ and the Church produceth a jubilee upon earth, and causeth the streets of the heavenly Jerusalem to resound with hallelujahs. For this the angels tune their golden harps, while prophets, apostles, martyrs, and saints fill up the universal chorus of “Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.”

16. *Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.*

In this verse the prophet foretelleth the fruit that should spring from the glorious nuptials, which he
hath

hath been celebrating. He assureth the spouse, that instead of her earthly kindred, whether Jewish, or Pagan, which she was to leave for Christ, should arise an illustrious and royal progeny of believers, out of whom were to be chosen Christian kings to govern the world, and Christian bishops to preside in the church. The expression, "whom thou mayest make princes," may answer to that in the Revelation, Ch. i. ver. 6. "And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father." So Mr Merrick thinks, who beautifully turns the passage, in his Poetical Version, as follows—

No more the Patriarchs of thy line
In time's long records chief shall shine;
Thy greater Sons, to empire born,
Its future annals shall adorn.

Thy power deriv'd to them display,
And stretch thro' Earth their boundless sway.

17. I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.

By inditing this divine marriage-song, appointed to be sung, in the congregations of the faithful, from age to age, the Psalmist hath been, as he foresaw he should be, the blessed means of celebrating his Redeemer's name, and inciting the nations of the world to do likewise; nor will he cease to be so, while the xlvth Psalm continues to be sung in the church upon earth; that is, while there remaineth a church upon earth, to sing it. And we, who now do sing it, are witnesses of these things.

P S A L M XLVI.

ARGUMENT.

The Church, in time of trouble, declares 1. her trust and confidence to be in God, and doubts

not 2, 3. of being preserved safe, by means of this anchor, in the most stormy seasons; even then 4, 5. enjoying the comforts of the Spirit, and the presence of Christ in the midst of her. She describes, 6 and 7. exults in the power and might of her victorious Lord; 8. calling the world to view and consider his wonderful works. 9. He himself is introduced, as speaking the nations into peace and obedience. She concludes with a repetition of ver. 7. in the way of chorus.

1. God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

As we are continually beset by "troubles," either bodily or spiritual, so we continually stand in need of a city of "refuge and strength," into which we may fly, and be safe. Religion is that city, whose gates are always open to the afflicted soul. We profess to believe this: do we act agreeably to such profession?

2. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; 3. Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.

The church declares her full and firm confidence in God, as her refuge and strength, amidst all the tumults and confusions of the world, the raging of nations, and the fall of empires. Nay, at that last great and terrible day, when sea and land are to be confounded, and every mountain and hill removed for ever; when there is to be "distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring;" even then, the righteous shall have no cause to "fear," but rather to "lift up their heads," with joy and triumph, because then it is, that their "redemption draweth nigh." Let us set that day before us, and try ourselves by that test.

4. There

4. *There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God: the holy place of the tabernacle of the most High.* 5. *God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early; Heb. when the morning appeareth.*

Such is the ground, on which the church erects her confidence. Instead of those waters, which overwhelm the world, she has within herself the fountain of consolation, sending forth rivers of spiritual joy and pleasure; and in the place of secular instability, she is possessed of a city and hill, which stand fast for ever, being the residence of the Eternal, who, at the dawn of the last morning, will finally appear as the protector and avenger of Israel.

6. *The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted.*

How concise, how energetic, how truly and astonishingly sublime! The kingdom of Christ being twofold, these words may be applied either to the overthrow of heathenism, and the establishment of the Gospel; or to the destruction of the world, and the erection of Messiah's triumphant throne. Conquer, O Lord, all our perverse affections, and reign in us, that we may conquer, and reign with thee.

7. *The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge; Heb. an high place for us.*

To "the LORD of hosts" all creatures in heaven and earth are subject; in "the God of Jacob," the church acknowledges the Saviour of his chosen. If this person be IMMANUEL, GOD WITH US, of whom can we be afraid?

8. *Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth.* 9. *He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth, he breaketh the bow,*

and cutteth the spear in sunder, he burneth the chariot in the fire.

The church, in these words, proposes to us the noblest subjects for contemplation; namely, the glorious victories of our Lord, partly gained already, and partly to be gained hereafter, in order to the final establishment of universal peace, righteousness, and bliss, in his heavenly kingdom. Then the mighty shall be fallen, and the weapons of war perished, for ever. Hasten, O Lord, that blessed day; but first prepare us for it.

10. *Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.*

In this verse there is a change of person, and Jehovah himself is introduced, as commanding the world to cease its opposition, to his own power, and to acknowledge his sovereignty over all the kingdoms of the nations. Let our rebellious passions hear this divine edict, tremble, and obey.

11. *The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.* See ver. 7.

IX DAY. EVENING PRAYER. PSALM XLVII.

ARGUMENT.

In this Psalm, appointed by the church to be used on Ascension day, the prophet 1. calls the nations to celebrate so glorious a festival; and that, on account 2. of Christ's power, and the mightiness of his kingdom; 3. of his victories and triumphs, through the Gospel; 4. of the inheritance prepared for his chosen, in the heavenly Canaan, by his own ascension thither; which 5. is described under images borrowed from the ascent of the ark into the holy city and temple; an occasion, on which the Psalm was probably composed. 6, 7. He again and again exhorts all people to sing

sing the praises of their God and King, and to sing with the understanding, as well as with the voice. 8, 9. The Psalm concludes with predicting the establishment of Christ's kingdom, and the conversion of the Gentile kings and nations to the faith.

1. *O clap your hands all ye people, shout unto God with the voice of triumph.*

The prophet invites all nations to celebrate the festival of Messiah's exaltation, because all nations had a share in the benefits and blessings of that glorious day. God is to be worshipped with bodily, as well as spiritual worship: every "hand" should be lifted up to him who formed it, and every "mouth" should praise him who giveth breath for that purpose.

2. *For the LORD most high is terrible, he is a great King over all the earth.*

The church celebrates the ascension of Christ, because then he was "highly exalted;" then he became "terrible" to his enemies, all power in heaven and in earth being committed to him; and then he began to display the excellent majesty of his universal kingdom, to which he was then inaugurated, being crowned "King of kings, and Lord of lords."

3. *He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet.*

The consequence of our Lord's ascension was the going forth of the all-subduing Word, under the influence and direction of which, the convinced and converted nations renounced their idols and their lusts, and bowed their willing necks to the yoke of Jesus. This is that great conquest, foreshewed by the victories of Joshua, David, and all the faithful heroes of old time, and foretold in language borrowed from their histories.

4. *He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved.*

The land of Canaan, emphatically stiled, “that good land, and the glory of all lands,” was the excellent inheritance,” chosen for the sons of Jacob, and consigned to them, upon the expulsion of the idolatrous nations. But from that inheritance Israel also hath long since been expelled: and Christians, by these words, are taught to look to “an inheritance eternal, and incorruptible, and that fadeth not away;” to those happy and enduring mansions, which the Son of God is gone to prepare for them that love him, and are beloved of him.

5. *God is gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet.*

Literally, if applied to the ark, as Bishop Patrick paraphrases the verse, “God is gone up, by the special token of his presence, into that holy place, with shouts of joy and praise; the LORD is gone up in a triumphant pomp, with the sound of the trumpet, and all other instruments of music.” See 2 Sam. vi. 5, 15. 2 Chron. v. 2, 12, &c. Psal. cxxxii. 8, 9. But spiritually, as applied now, by the Christian church, to the ascension of Christ into heaven, prefigured by that of the ark into the temple—God incarnate is gone up into that holy place, not made with hands; the everlasting doors of heaven are opened, for the King of glory to enter, and repossess his ancient throne; there he is received by united acclamations of the celestial armies, by that “shout,” that voice of the archangel, and that “trump of God,” which are to sound again, in the day when he shall “so come, in like manner, as he went into heaven *.”

6. *Sing*

* “Ascendit Deus”—Ascendit acra in Jerusalem cum cantu. Prophetice, ascendit Christus in coelum. BOSSUET.

6. *Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises unto our King, sing praises.* 7. *For God is the King of all the earth, sing ye praises with understanding.*

Who can contemplate the glorious triumph of human nature over its enemies, in the person of our King, risen and ascended, without finding himself constrained to break forth into joy, and to sing, with a thankful heart, and an elevated voice, the praises due unto his holy name! These divine hymns were designed for that purpose. Let us therefore sing them, and let us sing them “with understanding;” considering, by whom they were indited, and of whom they treat; reflecting, that the eternal Spirit is their author; and their subject, the blessed Jesus.

8. *God reigneth over the heathen; God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness.*

We are never suffered to forget, that the end of Messiah’s exaltation to the right hand of the majesty in the heavens, was the conversion and salvation of the world; so continually do the prophets and apostles delight to dwell upon that most interesting topic, the conversion of the “nations” to the Gospel of Christ. Why do we vainly fancy, that we belong to Him, unless his Spirit “reign” in our hearts by faith?

9. *The princes of the people are gathered together, even the people of the God of Abraham: for the shields of the earth belong unto God: he is greatly exalted.*

This verse plainly describeth the kings of the Gentiles as acceding to the church; as becoming, with their subjects, through faith, “the people of the God of Abraham,” and a part of the sacred peculium; as submitting to God in Christ that power with which they were invested, as “shields of the
the

the earth," or protectors of their several kingdoms; and as bowing their sceptres to the cross of Jesus *. The sense of the verse, expressed in the New Testament language, would be, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever." So let every nation be converted unto thee, O Lord: and every king become thy son and servant; until all the world shall worship thee, sing of thee, and praise thy name!

P S A L M XLVIII.

ARGUMENT.

This Psalm is one of those, which by our church are appointed to be used on Whitsunday, because under images taken from the earthly city Jerusalem, newly rescued from her enemies by him who resided in the material temple on mount Zion, are celebrated 1, 2, 3. the glory, the beauty, and the strength of the church Christian, that city and temple of Messiah; who 4—7. is described as breaking in pieces, and bringing to nothing, the opposition formed against her by the heathen kings and emperors; on which account, 8—11. she expresseth her gratitude and joy; 12—14. exhorting her to contemplate, and transmit to posterity, an account of those wonderful works of God, the establishment and preservation of his church in the world; for which she wishes all generations, after her example, to adore and praise his holy name, for ever and ever.

1. *Great*

* This latter part of the verse is differently explained by the Rev. Mr Merrick, in his poetical paraphrase of this psalm.

For he, whose hands, amid the skies,
Th' eternal sceptre wield,
To earth's whole race his care applies,
And o'er them spreads his shield.

1. *Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness.*

The prophet, preparing to celebrate the beauty and magnificence of the church, begins with setting forth the praises of her great founder, whose wisdom, mercy, and power, as they are conspicuous in all his works, so, more especially, in this, the chief and crown of all; for which, his name can never be sufficiently extolled, by the inhabitants of the new Jerusalem; and by them it ought to be extolled for ever and ever.

2. *Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.*

2. How “beautiful” is the holy and heavenly Zion, or the Christian church; how truly is she “the joy of the whole earth,” by the glad tidings which her ministers continually publish; how properly is this Jerusalem stiled, “the city of the great King!”

3. *God is known in her palaces for a refuge.*

The great founder of the church is also her protector and defender; the dependance of the new Jerusalem, like that of the old, is not in man, or in the arm of flesh, but in the God, who resideth in the midst of her. For, surely, unless he kept the holy city, the watchmen in the towers would wake but in vain.

4. *For lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together.*

Never were the power and malice of earthly princes more violently bent to hinder the building of Jerusalem, or to pull down what was already built, than they were to prevent the edification of the church, and to root up its foundations. But the

the event, with regard to the latter, was the same, which had often happened, in the case of the former.

5. *They saw it, and so they marvelled, they were troubled, and hasted away.* 6. *Fear took hold upon them there, and pain as of a woman in travail.*

The potentates of the world saw the miracles of the apostles, the courage and constancy of the martyrs, and the daily increase of the church, notwithstanding all their persecutions; they beheld with astonishment the rapid progress of the faith through the Roman empire; they called upon their gods, but their gods could not help themselves; idolatry expired at the foot of the victorious cross, and the power, which supported it, became CHRISTIAN.

7. *Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish, with the east wind.*

In the foregoing verse, the consternation amongst the enemies of the church was compared to the horrors of a travailing woman; here it is likened to the apprehensions of despairing mariners. Nor indeed can any thing in nature more fitly represent the overthrow of heathenism by the Spirit of the Gospel, than the wreck of a fleet of ships in a storm at sea. Both are effected by the mighty power of God*.

8. *As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God; God will establish it for ever.*

The church heard, by the prophets, of the future birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of

* Sensus est; qualis ventus vehemens conterit naves magni maris, talis est Dei vis tuentis Jerusalem, et hostilem exercitum dissipantis. BOSSUET. Illustrations of this kind are sometimes introduced, by the sacred writers, with the mark of comparison; and frequently, as here, without it. The meaning evidently is, that as the east wind shatters in pieces the ships of Tarshish, so the divine power struck the heathen kings with terror and astonishment.

of Messiah; of the effusion of the Spirit, and her own enlargement, establishment, and preservation, in the Gentile world. These predictions, which she had so often “heard” she hath “seen” accomplished, even to this day*; and therefore doubts not of God’s continuing his favour and protection, to the end of time.

9. *We have thought, or, we wait in silence and patience for thy loving kindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple.*

Contemplation of all the wondrous works, which the Lord our God hath wrought for us, produces faith in his promises, and resignation to his will: and he that, with these dispositions, waits for God’s mercies, in God’s house, shall not wait in vain.

10. *According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise unto the ends of the earth: thy right hand is full of righteousness.*

Wherever the name of God is known, and his works are declared, there the sacrifice of praise must needs be offered to him, by men, who are made sensible of his mercies towards them: and the day is coming, when all the world shall be forced to acknowledge, that his “right hand is full of righteousness,” and his judgments are just.

11. *Let mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of thy judgments.*

The

* “Sicut audivimus”—Propetia Isaia videtur hic notari: sensusque est; sicut audivimus ab Isaia prophetatum, fore ut obsidio mirabiliter solveretur, ac Sennacherabi Dux Rabfaces, ejusque exercitus caderetur, sic impletum vidimus. Isai. xxxvii. 21. 2 Reg. xix. 20. Qua figura caelestis Jerusalem incolae et ipsi canunt, “sicut audivimus,” ex auditu fidei, Gal. iii. 25. “sic vidimus,” jam sublato velo, atque aperta Dei facie. Deus fundavit eam: nihil habet metuendum, tanto exempta periculo. Prophetice. de Ecclesia fundata super petram, ideoque inconcussa. Matt. xvi. 18. BOSSUET.

The church, and all her children, are exhorted to rejoice, with joy unspeakable, and full of glory, on account of the manifestation of divine power, on her behalf, against her enemies. Thus, at the fall of the mystic Babylon, it is said—"Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets, for God hath avenged you on her." Rev. xviii. 20.

12. *Walk about Zion, and go round about her; tell the towers thereof.* 13. *Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces, that ye may tell it to the generations following.*

Christians are here enjoined to contemplate, again and again, continually, the fabric of the spiritual Jerusalem, wonderfully raised, and as wonderfully preserved; to consider attentively the parts designed for use, for strength, for ornament; that they may be able to instruct posterity in the nature and history of this holy building, and in their duty of forwarding and defending the same, from generation to generation.

14. *For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.*

Let the world worship whom, or what it will, we worship none other but Him, who, by his Spirit, founded, and, by his power, preserveth the church; who, by that Spirit, "guideth" us through life, and by that power, will enable us to overcome "death*," that so we may rejoice and triumph for evermore, as citizens of the city of God, and subjects of the King of glory.

PSALM

* "This God will be our God to all eternity, and (by that power which he has already exerted in our protection) will conduct us through life with safety." MERRICK.

P S A L M XLIX.

ARGUMENT.

The prophet, after a solemn introduction, 1—4. in which the whole world is called upon, to hear a lesson of divine wisdom, 5. proposes the subject in a question, implying the great folly of yielding to the temptation of fear, in the time of affliction and persecution, when the rich and powerful are in arms against the Innocent and Righteous Sufferer; inasmuch as 5—9. no man, by his riches or power, can redeem his brother, or himself, in the evil day; but 10. wise and foolish die, and leave their estates to others; and, 11—13. notwithstanding all their care and pains, are soon forgotten, while they are detained, by death, in the grave, till they rise to judgment and condemnation. On the other hand, the prophet, in the person of Messiah, 15. declares his faith in a joyful resurrection to life and glory, through the power of Jehovah; and 16—20. exhorts believers, neither to fear, nor envy the man of the world, considering what his latter end is to be.

1. *Hear this, all ye people, give ear all ye inhabitants of the world:* 2. *Both low and high, rich and poor together.*

The Psalm opens with great dignity, and the prophet speaks, “as one having authority.” He demands an audience, like that, which is to be assembled at the last day; having something to deliver, which is universally important and interesting; something, which concerns every age, and condition, and nation, under heaven. And we may observe, that although the sound of this Psalm, when first uttered, could be heard only within the confines of Judea, yet the knowledge of it hath since

actually been diffused, in the Christian church, throughout the world, from the rising to the setting sun. But how few, alas, have duly attended to the salutary lesson, which it so divinely teacheth!

3. *My mouth shall speak of wisdom; and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding.*

At the call of folly, what multitudes are always ready to assemble! But Wisdom, eternal and essential Wisdom, crieth without; she lifteth up her voice in the streets; and who is at leisure to attend her heavenly lectures? The “mouth” of Jesus always “spoke of wisdom;” but few regarded him: the “meditation of his heart” was ever “of understanding;” but it was accounted madness.

4. *I will incline mine ear to a parable; I will open my dark speech upon the harp.*

In the promulgation of wisdom and understanding to the world, the prophet, as the faithful scribe of the Spirit, was to speak only what he should hear, by “inclining his ear” to his divine Teacher; he was to speak in the way of “parable, or proverb, or problem,” that is, in such a way, as should require study and diligence, to unfold and explain; in such a way, as the world is not inclined to understand, or listen to; as our Lord delivered his doctrines, when on earth. And, that melody might serve as a vehicle for instruction, this important lesson was to be set to music, and played upon the harp.

5. *Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?*

The iniquity of my heels, says Bishop Lowth, is hardly sense. Suppose *אָרָץ* to be, not a noun, but the present participle of the verb; it will then be, “The wickedness of those that lie in wait for me,” or “endeavour to supplant me.” Bishop Hare likewise, as Mr Merrick has observed, translates *אָרָץ* *insidantium*

insidiantium mihi." I had, at first, given another turn to the Psalmist's question, and, by "the iniquity of my heels," had understood to be meant, "the iniquity of my footsteps," that is, "my goings, or ways;" (כפף being used for footsteps, Ps. lvi. 7. and Cant. i. 8.) as if it had been said—Why, for the sake of procuring riches, or power, should I bring fear and anguish upon myself, in that hour, when my sins will find me out, and neither riches, nor power, can deliver me from the punishment due to them? Thus Bossuet and Mudge understood the verse. But I am clear, that Bishop Lowth's idea is the true one: and then the purport of the question is plainly this—Why should I give way to fear and despondency, in the time of calamity, when the wickedness of my wealthy and powerful adversaries compasses me about, to supplant and overthrow me?

6. They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches: 7. None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: 8. (For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever.) 9. That he should still live for ever, and not see corruption.

In this world, as the wise man observeth, Eccles. x. 19. "money answereth all things;" and therefore, worldly men place their trust and confidence in it; but, in "the evil day," riches shall not be found; nor, if they could be found, would they avail any thing, towards eternal salvation. For, "what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" saith one, who best knew the value of souls; as he paid the price of that "precious redemption," which otherwise must have "ceased for ever;" when he suffered for us on the cross, and arose, on the

third day, to life and immortality, without "seeing corruption."*

10. *For he seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others.*

The inability of man to save his brother, or himself, from death, is evinced by daily experience, which sheweth us, that the penalty due to sin is continually levied upon all; wisdom and folly go down into the dust together; "and then, whose shall those things be, which have been provided?" Luke xii. 20. Their possessions come into the hands of others, perhaps of those for whom they never intended them, and who have neither inclination nor ability to do the dead man any service.

11. *Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names.*

Various are the contrivances of vain men, to have their names written on earth, and to procure, after their deaths, an imaginary immortality, for themselves and their families, in the memory and conversation of posterity; which is not often obtained; and, if obtained, is of no value; when, with less trouble, they might have had their names written in heaven, and have secured to themselves a blessed immortality, in the glorious kingdom of their Redeemer.

12. *Nevertheless, man being in honour, abideth not; he is like the beasts that perish.*

The continuance of man in the world is as that of a traveller at an inn, who tarrieth but for a night; so that if honour and wealth do not soon leave him, he

* Hos versus ad Christum Patres referunt, ut sensus sit, nemo purus homo fratrem redimit, sed tantum ille homo qui etiam Deus est. Memorant etiam Interpretes R. Mosen Hazardan, qui verba hæc de Rege Messia intelligit, qui pro redemptione fratrum mortuus, postea in æternum vivat, uti prædictum est ab Isaiâ, liii. 10. BOSSUET.

he must soon leave them, and, like the brutes around him, return to his earth, never more to be seen, and little more to be thought of.* Families decay, and are extinguished, as well as individuals; and the world itself is to perish, after the same example. That such beings, in such a place, should think of becoming glorious and immortal!

13. *This their way is their folly; yet their posterity approve their sayings.*

The practice of labouring to acquire wealth and greatness, which can be of no service after death, and of endeavouring to perpetuate the possession of the most uncertain things in nature, is, doubtless, a folly; but it is a folly, which, like many others, is at once blamed, and imitated.

14. *Like sheep, that, or, they are laid in the grave, death shall feed on them: and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning, and their beauty shall consume in the grave, from their dwelling.*

The high and mighty ones of earth, who cause people to fear, and nations to tremble around them, must one day crowd the grave; in multitude and impotence, though not in innocence, resembling sheep, driven and confined, by the butcher, in his house of slaughter. There death, that ravening wolf shall feed sweetly on them, and devour his long expected prey, in silence and darkness, until the glorious mourning of the resurrection dawn; when the once oppressed and afflicted righteous, risen from the dead, and sitting, with their Lord, in judgment, shall have the dominion over their cruel and insulting enemies; whose faded beauty, withered strength, and departed glory, shall display to men and angels the

* "Comparatus est jumentis:" quoad temporalia, nihil habet amplius, atque omnino instar jumenti est, nisi æterna meditatur. BOSSUET.

the vanity of that confidence, which is not placed in God.

15. *But God will redeem my soul, or, animal frame, from the power of the grave; for he shall receive me.*

The righteous, as well as the wicked, descend into the grave; to the bodies of the former it is a resting place, as the prison was to St Peter, till the angel of the Lord shall awaken them, and call them forth; while to the latter it is a condemned hold, from which, at the appointed day, they are to be dragged to execution*. The prophet here expresseth a full and firm faith in the resurrection; and may be conceived as speaking in the person of Him, who was first redeemed from the grave, and accepted by the Father; who did not “despond in the days of evil, and when the wickedness of his supplanters compassed him about;” as foreseeing their speedy destruction, and his own approaching resurrection and exalting. And therefore, he thus exhorts each disciple of his in the subsequent verses of our Psalm—

16. *Be not thou afraid, when one is made rich; when the glory of his house is increased.* 17. *For when he dieth, he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him.*

This is the conclusion of the Psalm, naturally following from the premises; and addressed, by way of exhortation and comfort, to the meek and humble disciples of the Lamb; directing them to fear God, who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell, and not to be afraid of the short lived power, conferred in this world, by wealth, over the body only.

* Impiorum inanitate despecta, assurgit ad bonos in Deum sperantes, quorum Deus animam ab inferis redimit, cum a sepulchro assumptos ad vitam æternam transfert. Alioqui, neque qui sperat in Domino plus reliquis haberet, neque præfationi responderet hujus Psalmi doctrina. BOSSUET.

only. For this purpose, nothing is requisite, but to strip the worldling of the pomp and parade, the connections and relations of life, and to consider him, as he is to appear, on the day of his burial; when nothing shall attend him, but his shroud to the grave, and his works to the judgment seat. View him in this light, which is the proper light to view him in, and he will cease to be the object of fear, or envy.

18. *Though whilst he lived, he blessed his soul; and men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself.*

Such must be the worldling's end, as described above, however, in the day of health and prosperity, he may bless himself, and say, "Soul, thou hast goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Nor will such a speech, whenever it is spoken, want its admirers: it will have the applause of numbers, whose opinion it is, that "there is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat, and drink, and enjoy himself, all the days of his life, which God giveth him under the sun."

19. *He shall go to the generation of his fathers, they shall never see light.*

They who follow their fathers in sin, must follow them likewise into the torments of that sad place, where darkness has fixed its everlasting abode, for the reception of those who ever loved and embraced it; and where the light of life and salvation no longer visits those, who always hated, and rejected it.

20. *Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.*

The sum of the whole matter is, that it can profit a man nothing to gain the whole world; to become possessed of all its wealth, and all its power; if, after all, he lose his own soul, and be cast away,
for

for want of that holy and heavenly wisdom, which distinguishes him from the brutes, and sets him above them, in his life, and at his death.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

Horne, George, 1730-1792

A Commentary On The Book Of Psalms In Which Their Literal or Historical
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